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Eastern Apples • Chilean Avocados • LEAFY GREENS • *Foodservice Software* • IDAHO POTATOES • *Potato Merchandising*
WISCONSIN POTATOES • PEAR PROFITS • *Colorado Produce* • GREEN TRANSPORTATION • Pistachios • Cacti & Succulents

producebusiness

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MARKETING • MERCHANDISING • MANAGEMENT • PROCUREMENT

The Green Issue

SPECIAL SECTION
Starts on page 151

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Booth  Review

ALSO INSIDE: The 19th Annual
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COVER STORY

THE GREEN ISSUE 15
Are we entering a world where quality, price and service are insufficient to meet the desires and requirements of buyers, both consumer and trade?

GREEN GROWS UP 26
Environment and ethics are stirring up industry changes.

COMMENTARY

THE FRUITS OF THOUGHT
Wages And Social Responsibility 8

RETAIL PERSPECTIVE
Marketing Research And Analysis 180

EUROPEAN MARKET
Green Creativity 182

VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY
The Green Journey 183

IN EVERY ISSUE

THE QUIZ 4

WASHINGTON GRAPEVINE 6

RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE 10

COMMENTS AND ANALYSIS 11

PRODUCE WATCH 14

INFORMATION SHOWCASE 185

BLAST FROM THE PAST 186

SPECIAL REPORT

IDAHO POTATOES CAPTURE CONSUMER ATTENTION 119
Retailers can use Idaho potatoes' premium status to increase sales.

WISCONSIN POTATOES OFFER PLETHORA OF CHOICES 131
Reach out to consumers with big selling points.

SPECIAL SECTION

Starts on page 151



FEATURES

FALL MERCHANDISING IDEAS 50
A cornucopia of produce promotions ushers in seasonal profits.

MICHIGAN APPLES — THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT 76
Climate and development cited as reasons for ripe trend.

EASTERN APPLES — A UNIQUE VARIETY OF FLAVORS 82
For consumers looking for locally grown, Eastern apples can be the answer.

CHILEAN AVOCADOS PROVIDE YEAR-ROUND SOURCING 86
This summer's freeze will not affect the quality of avocado exports to the United States.

FOUR WAYS TO ENLIVEN LEAFY GREEN SALES 92
Exploring the state of the greens.

COLORADO PRODUCE 146
Benefits for buyers include freight advantages, diversity and quality.

NEW TRANSPORT TECHNOLOGY GETS GREEN LIGHT 171
A variety of efforts are on the horizon.

DEPARTMENTS

FOODSERVICE MARKETING
Computer Software 96
Revolutionizing the way foodservice manages its produce acquisitions.

MERCHANDISING REVIEW
Potatoes Can Drive The Produce Engine 126
Focus on variety, displays and cross-promotions.

MERCHANDISING REVIEW
Perfecting Pear Sales 136
Ripe and ready-to-eat are keys to increasing pear profits.

DRIED FRUIT AND NUTS
Pistachio Industry Braces For Banner Crop 174
More availability creates year-round demand for pistachios.

FLORAL AND FOLIAGE MARKETING
Surge In Succulent Sales 178
Expanding supermarket floral department can increase overall sales.

SPECIAL FEATURE

FROM THE PAGES OF THE PERISHABLE PUNDIT
The Problem With Food Miles 12

19TH ANNUAL MARKETING EXCELLENCE AWARDS 37

PHILADELPHIA REGIONAL MARKET PROFILE

MARKET PROFILE:
Philadelphia Stays On TopPage 60

RESTAURANT PROFILE:
La FamigliaPage 71

RETAIL PROFILE:
Santori's Fruit And Vegetables ..Page 73



SPECIAL ADVERTISING SECTION



A TOUR OF
GEORGIA
PRODUCE

- Interview With Tommy Irvin, Georgia Commissioner of Agriculture
- Retail Buyers Guide
- Promoting Georgia Grown
- Local To Global
- Going To Market
- Muscadines Fill Niche Market

STARTS ON PAGE 99

PRODUCE QUIZ



THIS MONTH'S WINNER:

Marc Hop

Controller

Superior Sales, Inc.

Hudsonville, MI



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How To Win

To win the PRODUCE BUSINESS Quiz, the first thing you have to do is enter. The rules are simple: Read through the articles and advertisements in this issue to find the answers. Fill in the blanks corresponding to the questions below, and either cut along the dotted line or photocopy the page, and send your answers along with a business card or company letterhead to the address listed on the coupon. The winner will be chosen by drawing from the responses received before the publication of our November issue of PRODUCE BUSINESS. The winner must agree to submit a color photo to be published in that issue.

From packaging to delivery, there is never a dull moment for produce growers. Just ask Marc Hop, controller for Superior Sales, Inc., a Hudsonville, MI-based grower, which specializes in mixed vegetables. "Every day is different," he says. "All of the variables that come along with selling a perishable commodity make this job very exciting."

An 8-year veteran to the produce industry, Hop oversees all financial aspects for Superior Sales. He has been reading PRODUCE BUSINESS for four years. "I enjoy the broad range of topics that cover everything from the grower's aspect to the consumer's perspective," Marc says.

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QUESTIONS FOR THE SEPTEMBER ISSUE

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- 2) What is the toll-free number for Four Seasons Produce? _____
- 3) What is the fax number for Chelan Fresh? _____
- 4) Where is Brooks Tropicals located? _____
- 5) What is the PMA booth number for Pride of New York? _____
- 6) What is the street address for Riveridge Produce? _____

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Social Security No-Match Rule

On Aug. 15, 2007, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) issued a final regulation governing the Social Security Number (SSN) no-match letters employers receive for withholding employees' Social Security allocations. This directly affects the customary practices of all businesses and their employees.

Employers are required to send Form W-2 to the Social Security Administration (SSA) by the last day of February (or last day of March if filing electronically) to report wages and taxes of employees for the previous calendar year. Employers are required to file W-2s for wages paid to each employee from whom: a) income, social security or Medicare taxes were withheld or b) income tax would have been withheld if the employee had claimed no more than one withholding allowance or had not claimed exemption from withholding on Form W-4.

In cases where employee names and SSNs do not match SSA records, SSA sends a letter, known as a no-match letter, to inform the employer. There can be many causes for a no-match, including a technical error, such as a misspelled name or clerical error. Another cause may be an employee not authorized to work in the United States and using a false SSN or an SSN assigned to someone else. A no-match letter as well as an employer's Employment Eligibility Verification form can serve as indicators that an employee may be an unauthorized alien.

Under the new regulation, receipt of a no-match letter from SSA or DHS may be sufficient to constitute constructive knowledge of unauthorized employment.

The regulation provides specific steps an employer should take to constitute "due diligence" and, hopefully, avoid liability in situations where it has received a no-match letter. This summary gives a quick overview of the key components of this new regulation:

- The rule becomes effective on Sept. 14.
- Upon receipt of a no-match letter from DHS or SSA, an employer has 30 days from

receipt to determine whether it properly recorded the listed employees' names and SSN or alien documents. If the employer made a clerical mistake, it must correct it and file the corrected information with SSA

This regulation could have a devastating effect on agriculture and labor-intensive packing and processing operations.

or DHS within the 30-day period.

- If the employer reported the information correctly on its I-9 or W-2 forms, it must confirm with the employee that he/she provided accurate information. If the employee did report the information accurately, the employer must ask the employee to ascertain and correct the problem with the appropriate agency. While the employer does not have a duty to solve the problem for the employee, it must inform the employee of the 90-day time frame for providing verifiably legitimate documents.

- The employer and employee have 90 days from receipt of the agency letter within which to complete this process.

- If during the 90-day period the employee provides corrected information, the employer is responsible for verifying the correction with DHS or SSA.

- If at the end of 90 days the employer cannot obtain verification from DHS or SSA that the document in question is acceptable, the employer will have to terminate the employee or face the risk DHS may find it had constructive knowledge the employee was unauthorized.

- If at the end of 90 days the employer cannot obtain verification, it has an additional 3 days to complete a new I-9 Form for the employee, using the same procedures as if he/she were newly hired. The employer may not accept any document disputed in the written notice. The employer must require that a document establishing identity or that an identity and work authorization contain a photograph.

- An employer following DHS procedures will have a "safe harbor." DHS will not consider it to have constructive knowledge it employed unauthorized workers, unless DHS could prove independently the employer had actual or other knowledge the employee was unauthorized to work. The safe harbor would be available even if the worker later were determined to be unauthorized, assuming the employer followed DHS procedures and could prove it did so.

- An employer failing to follow procedures set forth in DHS' rule will be considered by DHS to have constructive knowledge it employed unauthorized workers. This will influence DHS' exercise of its prosecutorial discretion in deciding whether to bring charges against employers that receive no-match letters and do not follow up on them.

- Employers that re-verify documents listed in no-match letters will have a defense against discrimination allegations based on document-abuse provisions of current immigration law.

This rule provides DHS increased authority to penalize employers if workers' names and SSNs do not match government records. It expands the legal definitions of "knowledge" an employee is unauthorized to work and greatly increases employers' potential liability if workers are unauthorized aliens. For the produce industry, which depends so heavily on an immigrant workforce, this regulation could have a devastating effect on agriculture and labor-intensive packing and processing operations. It could also revive the push for an agriculture-specific legislative measure that reforms the current H2-A program for agriculture operations.

DETECTING A PROBLEM



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Wages And Social Responsibility

The industry is in for a rough ride. Terms such as “green” and “socially responsible” are subject to many interpretations. If you read the press releases, you may think the focus will be on reducing packaging waste, solar energy or biodiesel in trucks. Yet part of sustainability and social responsibility is certain to be interpreted to include improving wages and working conditions for farm workers.

Efforts are apace to help domestic farm workers. McDonald's, for example, recently agreed to pay an additional penny a pound for Florida round tomatoes used in its U.S. restaurants, with the extra money going to farm workers. This follows the Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association's 2005 Socially Accountable Farm Employers (SAFE) Program, which provides an external verification that workers are being treated in accordance with the law.

According to McDonald's website:

In 2006, we and our suppliers instituted industry-leading grower standards that go beyond the SAFE standards... Florida tomato growers that supply the McDonald's System must hire workers as employees, rather than day laborers, provide them with opportunities to raise issues and offer suggestions, and ensure they have access to safe, affordable housing (where available) and local health screening and counseling services.

More and more attention will be paid to the condition of farm workers, and growers kid themselves if they think a high hourly wage will insulate them from criticism. Attention will focus on the annual income and living conditions of U.S. farm workers. Yet, this is nothing compared to what will happen as advocacy groups start paying close attention to the work and living conditions of farm workers in developing countries.

We have all read news reports skewering Kathie Lee Gifford for lending her name to products produced in “sweatshops.” Here is how Human Rights For Workers, a self-proclaimed advocacy group, described the situation:

Take products bearing the Kathie Lee Gifford label and the multinational chain that sells them, Wal-Mart. Two years ago, after a National Labor Committee investigation exposed the exploitation of teen-age girls in a Honduran sweatshop making Kathie Lee pants, Ms. Gifford... became an active leader in setting up the Apparel Industry Partnership, a White House task force dedicated to eliminating sweatshop abuses not only in Honduras but elsewhere.

Now comes the revelation that handbags with the Kathie Lee label, sold by Wal-Mart, are made in three factories [in China] where conditions were among the worst among the 21 factories investigated for the National Labor Committee report. Through interviews away from the factory compound, a team of researchers from Hong Kong learned of conditions such as:

- *Pay as low as 12¢ an hour... sometimes withheld for months.*
- *Forced overtime, adding up to 84-hour workweeks, sometimes without the legally required overtime premium.*
- *Absence of benefits, even legally required ones.*
- *Housing in cramped quarters, 10 to 12 workers to a room.*
- *Stiff fines for breaking rules (e.g., loss of a day's pay for taking two evening hours to visit friends on a national holiday).*

Wal-Mart phased out the Kathie Lee Gifford line soon after.

Now, think about this: Every time a “sweatshop” opens, hundreds or thousands of people apply for jobs principally because factory work is so much more desirable than working in the fields!

As more produce is imported from more countries, advocacy groups will turn to Wal-Mart, McDonald's, other buyers plus branded produce companies to demand better treatment for farm workers outside the United States.

The industry is vulnerable and will be challenged on worker rights. In some Third World agricultural industries, children and adults routinely toil in heat from dawn to dusk, seven days a week, with inadequate and unclean food and drink, inadequate shelter and medical care for subsistence wages. Injuries are common.

The offenses that created uproar and cries of sweatshops for Kathy Lee Gifford, Nike and Wal-Mart pale in comparison to the everyday conditions of many Third World produce workers.

It takes only one press conference with a few little girls saying they pick a brand's or store's produce for 18 hours a day at 5¢ a box and their sister went to the hospital from heat exhaustion, their brother lost a leg in a tractor accident, etc.

Unfortunately, preventing children from working in impoverished countries will not mean they will be nurtured or schools will be built. It means they will have no means of subsistence and might turn to prostitution, robbery or work worse than agriculture.

If we require agricultural employers to provide each worker health insurance and a nice house with plumbing and air conditioning and if we demand nobody work more than 40 hours a week, the result is unlikely to be prosperity in these poor countries.

Most likely, companies would no longer produce in the most disadvantaged countries, as they would have no competitive edge to offer, so these countries would get even poorer and their people more desperate.

When people start talking about “social responsibility” and “sustainability,” they are often talking about policies that make Westerners feel good about themselves by seeming to demand high standards and fair treatment. The actual consequences are rarely so satisfactory. The social issue is distorted but it is a guaranteed crisis for the industry one day — and soon.

pb

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vulnerable and
should expect to
be challenged in
the area of
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The Power Of Suggestion

Consumers, who don't live and breathe produce like we do, must try to figure out on their own what to eat for better health, while keeping confident something in the fridge doesn't end up as a health threat — for whatever reason.

Produce Marketing Association's (PMA) latest consumer survey looks at what drives consumers to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables and checks their confidence in produce safety. Opinion Dynamics Corp. surveyed 1,000 primary food shoppers by telephone in mid-June and found that — leaving taste aside — other motivators for purchasing produce are crying out for our attention. These responses demonstrate how powerful our carefully targeted suggestions can be to information-hungry shoppers.

I wrote in my June column here about the value of touching someone through taste testing. In that column, I mentioned that earlier PMA research found 64 percent of shoppers surveyed reported their store didn't offer taste-testing. PMA went back and asked the question about the relative importance of taste-testing measured against other drivers.

When asked which one factor would make them more likely to purchase a fruit or vegetable they'd never purchased before, 45 percent of respondents ranked sampling first. Another 27 percent indicate "a recommendation from a trusted source" would do the trick.

While we purposely excluded taste specifically from our factors this time around, I can't help but link sampling to taste. Teaching shoppers through giving them a taste is a proven practice as old as the roadside vendors of biblical times. Today, successfully tempting customers' taste buds with sampling lays a fast track to the checkout.

When asked what most influenced them to make a new purchase other than taste, 36 percent of respondents cite nutritional value as tops. We know that high-nutritional value is a characteristic our category largely owns and that produce is one of the few food groups health experts encourage people to eat more of. We can't rely on nutrition alone as our sole message in marketing produce, but it

must remain a prominent one.

Our respondents told us various "triggers" at the retail point of sale make an important impact. In-store displays are viewed as the most effective trigger (43 percent), followed distantly by print advertisements (17 percent). Sixty-five percent indicate a produce clerk's recommendation influences them to purchase a new item; yet, earlier PMA research I've written about reveals almost half of shoppers surveyed report no contact at all with produce department staff. Produce clerk interaction can translate into dollars and cents that are currently being lost to lack of customer service.

Availability of locally grown foods, which ranked second behind nutritional value, also influences consumers. Twenty-one percent of surveyed shoppers ranked it as their most important influencer — ahead even of price, which was cited as the top motivator by 15 percent. When asked if they were more likely to buy fruits and vegetables labeled as locally grown, an overwhelming 67 percent said yes.

Previous PMA research suggests consumers perceive locally grown to mean better taste, nutrition and freshness. It should be no surprise to readers of *PRODUCE BUSINESS* that the demand for locally grown has swept across the country and manifests itself not only in stores but also in some restaurants.

Meanwhile, in a match-up between locally and organically grown produce, local beat out organic with our shoppers; only 9 percent cited organic as their primary motivator. As *Time* magazine suggested in a cover story earlier this year, locally grown food seems to have become the "new" organic in terms of hot buttons driving consumer demand.

Our shoppers report the major barrier to buying organics is price. Among those respondents who are not more likely to buy organic, 35 percent cite higher costs and 10 percent don't see a real difference between organic and traditionally grown.

There is good news about consumer confidence in produce safety. Our latest survey reveals the percentage of consumers placing themselves on the "most confident" end of the scale jumped from 25 percent in April to

Share with your customers what we as produce industry members are privileged to know daily.

31 percent in June. Could it be the industry's collective efforts to pioneer solutions and its ongoing communication outreach are starting to make a difference? I believe so, but much remains to be done. Also, we cannot forget building consumer confidence goes only as far as another major food safety outbreak. Keeping the charts moving upward requires every one of us to keep our vigilance up, too.

In fact, I see communication as a common thread throughout this latest research, which suggests several opportunities to appeal to consumers.

- Talk it up in the produce department, with sampling, produce clerk interaction and integrated point-of-sale materials.

- Showcase fruits' and vegetables' nutritional value and the message that eating more of them really does matter.

- Highlight locally grown products when they are available to make it known that contributing to the local economy is as important to your company as it is to your customers.

- Educate customers about produce safety advances. Lean on PMA for credible and current produce safety information.

In other words, share with your customers what we as produce industry members are privileged to know daily. You know how much this working knowledge influences your own produce purchasing behavior. Consider the possibilities of what this same information could do when shared with consumers. Then put this power of suggestion to work to increase their produce purchases — and your bottom line.



Think Double-Duty

What induces a consumer to try a new product? Some people expect research to provide new revelations, but good research typically confirms what we already know.

Bryan reports PMA research confirms there are two big drivers to new product trial in produce:

1. A consumer has sampled a product.
2. A consumer has heard from a trusted source it is a good product.

Note that the mere sampling of a product does not encourage trial. Consumers have to sample an item — and like it. So sampling is not a substitute for developing good tasting items; in fact, the better the item tastes, the better the sampling works.

Marketers also need to remember sampling goes way beyond what can be done in the produce department. Dick Spezzano, now of Spezzano Consulting Service, Inc., but at the time vice president of produce for Von's and chairman of the board of PMA, used to give speeches urging produce vendors to get their product on the salad bar at Sizzler — when the chain was in its glory days.

Even giving Sizzler the product for free might be profitable, he said, because it was a mass sampling program. Giving away product can be significantly less expensive than paying for demos, sampling staff, insurance, etc.

Using foodservice, especially white tablecloth restaurants, is a classic strategy in new product introduction. When kiwifruit was first imported into the United States from New Zealand, there was no money for mass marketing — but it was introduced to many chefs, especially pastry chefs, at upscale restaurants.

Soon consumers were sampling kiwi tarts and eating kiwi on fruit plates. They loved the product and started asking their grocers to get it in so they could use it at home.

Vendors also have to remember sampling doesn't mean just giving out raw product. Many times the goal is to sample prepared product. This both gives a consumer who already likes an item an idea for another application — which might spur consumption and purchase — and persuades consumers who

didn't know they would enjoy the product.

Many consumers who don't like eggplant would enjoy eggplant parmigiana. Although in-store demos can be expensive, an advantage to demo'ing prepared items is co-sponsoring demos with other companies — in this case a bread crumb, cheese and sauce company — thus substantially reducing the cost.

The notion of getting a "trusted source" to recommend product also offers many opportunities for marketers at all levels — and overlaps with sampling. The best "trusted source" is typically a relative or a friend, so sampling or demo programs do double duty — motivating the sample recipient to buy and consume the product and promoting the sample recipient to become a trusted source, urging family and friends to buy the product.

One of the goals of every retailer ought to be to turn itself into a trusted source for product recommendation. When the Waldbaum's chain put Julia Waldbaum on all its private label products, it created a personality — though she was a real person — who consumers could trust and turn to for advice.

Think of independent bookstores where the staff commonly has recommendations out on the shelves. No consumer should ever walk into a store without receiving the produce department's recommendation as to what is particularly interesting or delicious today. Note to retailers: You have to play this straight; you can't be a trusted source for product recommendations if you sell the recommendation to the highest bidder. And you can't promote what you happen to be stuck with.

Marketing to foodservice also plays into this effort to get trusted sources to recommend a product. The simple appearance of an item on the menu of a high-quality restaurant is a form of endorsement from a source of great authority — add in usage by Emeril, Bobby Flay and the rest of the Food Network gang and one has some real trusted authorities gunning for your product.

Public relations efforts are important here as well. Another form of trusted authority is getting mentions from women's service magazines, such as *Good Housekeeping*, and in

No consumer should ever walk into a store without receiving the produce department's recommendation as to what is particularly interesting or delicious today.

other media outlets.

That nutrition tops the charts, after taste, in what consumers say motivates them to purchase is also not surprising. If you don't know you are going to enjoy something, you might as well go with something good for you.

Many times research turns up findings that may have meanings other than those immediately obvious. Finding consumers are motivated to purchase by the availability of "locally grown" product may be such an example.

Although a few consumers may be motivated to purchase locally grown for environmental reasons or to support local farmers, these may well be niche motivators, just as the PMA research finds organic to be a niche motivator.

The consumer enthusiasm over locally grown may just be another expression of the consumer enthusiasm for good tasting produce. Locally grown signals fresh, crisp, ripe — all sensory, taste-related ideas.

Although it is reassuring to see consumer confidence in produce growing, PMA's survey was taken before food-safety problems with baby carrots from Mexico in Canada and a *Salmonella* find on spinach from California. Doubtless PMA will soon let us know precisely how fragile or how solid those gains in confidence may be.

The Problem With Food Miles



From Jim Prevor's *Perishable Pundit*, Aug. 10, 2007

The New York Times ran an op-ed article entitled, *Food That Travels Well*, on the hot subject of "Food Miles":

The term "food miles" — how far food has traveled before you buy it — has entered the enlightened lexicon. Environmental groups, especially in Europe, are pushing for labels that show how far food has traveled to get to the market, and books like Barbara Kingsolver's *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life* contemplate the damage wrought by trucking, shipping and flying food from distant parts of the globe.

There are many good reasons for eating local — freshness, purity, taste, community cohesion and preserving open space — but none of these benefits compares to the much-touted claim that eating local reduces fossil fuel consumption. In this respect, eating local joins recycling, biking to work and driving a hybrid as a realistic way that we can, as individuals, shrink our carbon footprint and be good stewards of the environment.

On its face, the connection between lowering food miles and decreasing greenhouse gas emissions is a no-brainer. In Iowa, the typical carrot has traveled 1,600 miles from California, a potato 1,200 miles from Idaho and a chuck roast 600 miles from Colorado. Seventy-five percent of the apples sold in New York City come from the West Coast or overseas, the writer Bill McKibben says, even though the state produces far more apples than city residents consume. These examples just scratch the surface of the problem. In light of this market redundancy, the only reasonable reaction, it seems, is to count food miles the way a dieter counts calories.

But is reducing food miles necessarily good for the envi-



Some people advocate labeling the food imported by air.

ronment? Researchers at Lincoln University in New Zealand, no doubt responding to Europe's push for "food miles labeling," recently published a study challenging the premise that more food miles automatically mean greater fossil fuel consumption. Other scientific studies have undertaken similar investigations. According to this peer-reviewed research, compelling evidence suggests that there is more — or less — to food miles than meets the eye.

It all depends on how you wield the carbon calculator. Instead of measuring a product's carbon footprint through food miles alone, the Lincoln University scientists expanded their equations to include other energy-consuming aspects of production — what economists call "factor inputs and externalities" — like water use, harvesting techniques, fertilizer outlays, renewable energy applications, means of transportation (and the kind of fuel used), the amount of carbon dioxide absorbed during photosynthesis, disposal of packaging, storage procedures and dozens of other cultivation inputs.

Incorporating these measurements into their assessments, scientists reached surprising conclusions. Most notably, they found that lamb raised on New Zealand's clover-choked pastures and shipped 11,000 miles by boat to Britain produced 1,520 pounds of carbon dioxide emissions per ton while British lamb produced 6,280 pounds of carbon dioxide per ton, in part because poorer British pastures force farmers to use feed. In other words, it is four times more energy-efficient for Londoners to buy lamb imported from the other side of the world than to buy it from a producer in their backyard. Similar figures were found for dairy products and fruit.

These life-cycle measurements are causing environmentalists worldwide to rethink the logic of food miles. New Zealand's most prominent environmental research organization, Landcare Research-Manaaki Whenua, explains that localism "is not always the most environmentally sound solu-



Farmers market shopper loading purchases into an SUV.

tion if more emissions are generated at other stages of the product life cycle than during transport." The British government's 2006 Food Industry Sustainability Strategy similarly seeks to consider the environmental costs "across the life cycle of the produce," not just in transportation.

"Eat local" advocates — a passionate cohort of which I am one — are bound to interpret these findings as a threat. We shouldn't. Not only do life cycle analyses offer genuine opportunities for environmentally efficient food production, but they also address several problems inherent in the eat-local philosophy.

Consider the most conspicuous ones: it is impossible for most of the world to feed itself a diverse and healthy diet through exclusively local food production — food will always have to travel; asking people to move to more fertile regions is sensible but alienating and unrealistic; consumers living in developed nations will, for better or worse, always demand choices beyond what the season has to offer.

Given these problems, wouldn't it make more sense to stop obsessing over food miles and work to strengthen comparative geographical advantages? And what if we did this while streamlining transportation services according to fuel-efficient standards? Shouldn't we create development incentives for regional nodes of food production that can provide sustainable produce for the less sustainable parts of the nation and the world as a whole? Might it be more logical to conceptualize a hub-and-spoke system of food production and distribution, with the hubs in a food system's naturally fertile hot spots and the spokes, which travel through the arid zones, connecting them while using hybrid engines and alternative sources of energy?

As concerned consumers and environmentalists, we must be prepared to seriously entertain these questions. We must also be prepared to accept that buying local is not necessarily beneficial for the environment. As much as this claim violates one of our most sacred assumptions, life cycle assessments offer far more valuable measurements to gauge the environmental impact of eating. While there will always be good reasons to encourage the growth of sustainable local food systems, we must also allow them to develop in tandem with what could be their equally sustainable global counterparts. We must accept the fact, in short, that distance is not the enemy of awareness.

About the best one can say for this piece is that there seems to be movement on the subject so that defenders of the concept of "food miles" are giving up on defending the ridiculous — that the only thing that matters is how far the product is shipped — to defending the merely incorrect — that by carefully doing a "life-cycle assessment" of each food, we can determine where it is best to purchase food from.

Food miles are, on their face, bizarre. The concept implies that one would help the environment by operating a pineapple-growing greenhouse in Toronto.

To think that consumers can do something useful for the environment by looking at "food miles" or "carbon footprints" is unreasonable.

Yet what this author advocates is more dangerous because, as a result of studies, it adds the patina of science to what is really just made up garble.

The problems are many, but let us look at five quick ones:

1. It is virtually impossible to know the true "carbon footprint" of anything. Flying strawberries from California to London? What if they fly in the belly of a passenger jet that would have flown anyway? How do we score that? The allocations are fundamentally arbitrary because there are so many different ways to calculate the carbon footprint.

2. How does anyone know what would be done in place of the current activity? So, if the land isn't valuable for agriculture where the strawberries grow, perhaps it will be developed into vacation homes that will be energy hogs. How do we score this?

3. Is this the only value in the whole world? What if an African tribe makes a living exporting vegetables to the United Kingdom, and if we stop buying their product, they will die? Does that count for nothing?

4. What if the "better" product is distributed slightly differently so consumers have to drive 15 minutes out of their way to farm stands to procure it? Maybe the inefficient transport — 20 items in a Range Rover — outweighs much more distant but more efficient commercial transport.

5. Whole industries are set up to take advantage of empty back hauls.

My family was once principally interested in growing produce in Puerto Rico — an expensive place compared to other Caribbean and Central American options, specifically because its large reefer import trade was

going back empty or hauling non-refrigerated cargo. An almost impossible thing to score.

The truth is that the pricing mechanism is the best single way we know to incorporate all the varied factors that go into deciding whether, here in the United States, we should buy our counter-seasonal grapes from South Africa, Chile or Australia.

The advocates of "food miles" don't recognize it, but what they really should be fighting for is pricing externalities into products.

So, if, for example, we have to maintain a navy because we need to import oil, we have to tax oil imports so that the cost of maintaining the navy falls on consumers of imported oil, not the general public.

Every product has a million unknown and, for practical purposes, unknowable impacts on the environment. Because some Mexican immigrants in California pick strawberries, towns in Mexico are transformed. Because consumers in London buy Kenyan produce, safari animals are not shot for food.

To think that consumers can do something useful for the environment by looking at "food miles" or "carbon footprints" is unreasonable. The best we can hope for is to make sure that the costs imposed on the environment by things such as oil are properly accounted for in the price of food and all other goods.

"Food miles" is a form of protectionism or nationalism in which foreign product is derided. Prosperity is not built on such notions.

GROWER/SHIPPER SOFTWARE SOLUTION

Vormittag Associates, Inc. (VAI), Ronkonkoma, NY, has announced a strategic alliance with AG Business Management. Fresh produce grower/shippers will be able to leverage VAI's S2K enterprise edition software and two AG Business modules — Grower Accounting for VAI and iTrade Integration for VAI — in a specially designed business solution.



Reader Service No. 300

GOOD-TO-GROW IN SUPERVALU

Supervalu, Eden Prairie, MN, will participate in this year's nationwide Good-to-Grow produce program. The campaign partners with the Discovery Kids Channel by providing tools that encourage children to eat more fruit and vegetables. There will be on-line and in-store promotional support for parents and teachers.



Reader Service No. 302

NATIONAL WATERMELON MONTH

The National Watermelon Association, Plant City, FL, announces that the U.S. Senate, through the leadership of Senators Saxby Chambliss (R-GA) and Johnny Isakson (R-GA), has designated July as National Watermelon Month. Long-term planning for 2008 will allow the industry to market watermelon in a variety of new ways.



Reader Service No. 304

"BEST OF SHOW" AWARD

Girard's Foodservice Dressings, City of Industry, CA, received the Produce Marketing Association's (PMA) "Best of Show" recognition for its booth at PMA's 2007 Foodservice Conference & Exposition in July in Monterey, CA. Criteria included booth presentation, product display and professional appearance/etiquette.



Reader Service No. 306

GOING GREEN

CARBON NEUTRAL PROJECT

Dole Food Company, Westlake Village, CA, has announced Standard Fruit de Costa Rica, its operating subsidiary in Costa Rica, and the Costa Rican Ministry of Environment and Energy agreed to work together to establish a carbon neutral product supply chain for bananas and pineapples, from their production in Costa Rica to the markets in North America and Europe.



SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY STANDARDS

Dole Food Company, Westlake Village, CA, has announced all its company-owned banana farms in Colombia have been certified to the Social Accountability International SA 8000 workplace and human rights standard. The certification covers the cultivation, harvesting and packing of organic and conventional bananas on eight farms.



Reader Service No. 308

SUPER SWEET BABY PLUMS

Alfiles Inc., Michoacán, Mexico, will be making super sweet baby plums available in the United States and Canada beginning in spring 2008. Grown only in the state of Michoacán from March through June, the plum flowers depend on Monarch butterflies for pollination. Mexican baby plums will be packed in a box containing 12 plums labeled by Alfiles Inc., Product of Michoacán, Mexico.



Reader Service No. 301

STRONG NEW YORK APPLE CROP

The New York Apple Association, Fishers, NY, has announced its crop prediction is 29.5 million bushels for the fall harvest. While growing conditions are favorable, many growers have concerns about higher input costs, particularly for energy and labor. A huge looming concern this fall will be having enough labor to harvest the crop.



Reader Service No. 303

LARSON JOINS SAGE

Sage Fruit Company, Yakima, WA, announces Larson Fruit Company, Selah, WA, has joined its ranks. Sage will be the exclusive sales and marketing agent for Larson beginning with new crop apples in 2007. In the upcoming season, Sage will market approximately 6.2 million boxes of apples in addition to its manifest of pears and cherries.



Reader Service No. 305

TURBANA PORT MOVE

Turbana, Coral Gables, FL, will move its port and warehousing operations to Philadelphia in spring 2008. The move will allow Turbana to continue serving its current customers and provide access to additional customers at a more competitive freight cost, give better operational efficiency and help develop more southbound cargo.



Reader Service No. 307

GOING GREEN

DEARDORFF ATTAINS SAFE CERTIFICATION

Deardorff Family Farms, Oxnard, CA, announces it has received SAFE — Socially Accountable Farm Employers — certification. Growers who earn SAFE certification has demonstrated commitment to ethical labor practices and must comply with strict standards outlined in SAFE's Farm Labor Employer Code of Conduct.



Reader Service No. 309

GOING GREEN

"ALL ABOARD" CAMPAIGN

International Paper, Memphis, TN, has partnered with the City of Memphis, Friends of City Beautiful and FCR of Tennessee in the "All Aboard" campaign to broaden the scope of recycling. The City has added corrugated packaging and paperboard packaging material to its list of acceptable recyclable items in the curbside-recycling program.



Reader Service No. 310

CORRECTION

In *More Than Just A French Fry* in the August issue of *PRODUCE BUSINESS*, we inadvertently identified Don Flannery as executive director of the Idaho Potato Commission. Mr. Flannery is executive director of the Maine Potato Board.

Produce Watch is a regular feature of *Produce Business*. Please send information on new products, personnel changes, industry, corporate and personal milestones and available literature, along with a color photo, slide or transparency to: Managing Editor, *Produce Business*, P.O. Box 810425, Boca Raton, FL 33481-0425, or e-mail us at ProduceBusiness@phoenixmedianet.com

The Green Issue



Are we entering a world where quality, price and service are insufficient to meet the desires and requirements of buyers, both consumer and trade?

BY JIM PREVOR

What does the green movement and its parent, the broader social responsibility movement, mean for the produce industry? At base, it is a sea change in procurement criteria.

Since time immemorial, produce, like most material things, has been sold primarily based on three criteria: quality, price and service.

Even the rise of such important trends as the organic movement didn't change this paradigm. Being grown without synthetic chemicals is still a testable product attribute; it is still an intrinsic characteristic distinguishing the organic product from another, conventionally grown, item.

On the other hand, no amount of product testing will ever reveal to a buyer — at the consumer or trade level — if a company's distribution center is covered in solar panels, if it takes care of its employees or if it uses biofuel in its trucks.

The business importance of the green and social responsibility movements is that one's customers — consumer or trade — will now evaluate not the product, not the price, not the service; instead they will evaluate the vendor itself in deciding from whom to purchase. They

look to align themselves with marketers who represent the values with which the customer wants to affiliate itself.

This is, of course, an oversimplification. It is perhaps more correct to say price, quality and service are still the ante, the price of entry into the business with expectations uniformly high for all three, but buyers are now at liberty to look at other criteria in selecting from whom to buy.

Economist John Kenneth Galbraith — who had a degree in agricultural economics from Berkeley — published *The Affluent Society* in 1958. It posited that economic thought of the day was based on 19th century notions of

scarcity as the defining characteristic of the age. Galbraith claimed the situation had changed. The traditional focus on increasing production was no longer going to be the driving force it once had been, since society had entered an age of mass affluence that would allow greater attention to social good and self-fulfillment.

He argued we had already reached a point where too much emphasis was paid on mindlessly increasing production of trivial items rather than investing in more needed and important social goods.

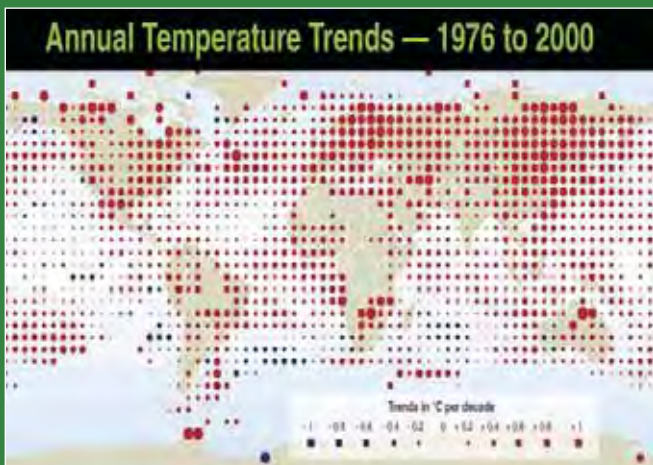
Since much of the world population still lives in poverty, increasing production remains an important public policy goal. Still, the green and social responsibility movements can be seen as an affirmation of Galbraith's principles. With affluence widely established so high-quality products can be economically produced and distributed broadly, attention can be paid to "luxuries" such as making sure one's vendors are in sync with one's values.

The epicenter of this movement is the United Kingdom, but the emotional and intellectual appeal of the message, combined with the buying power of the highly consolidated U.K. mul-



Is Climate Change Real?

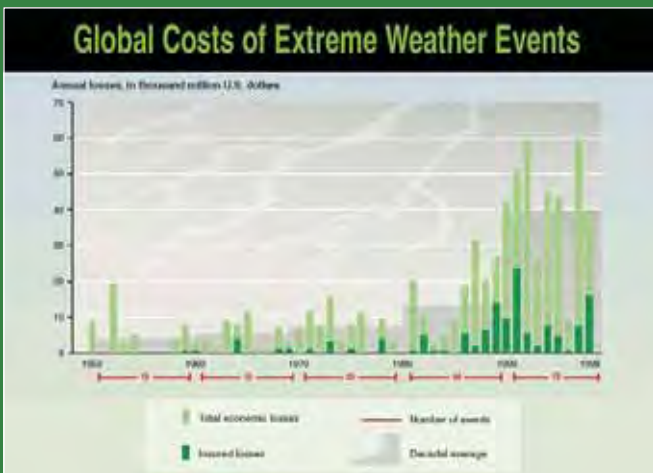
Those who promote that global warming is here, is a major long-term trend and is caused by man-made activity commonly point to three charts to illustrate their case.



Graphics: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

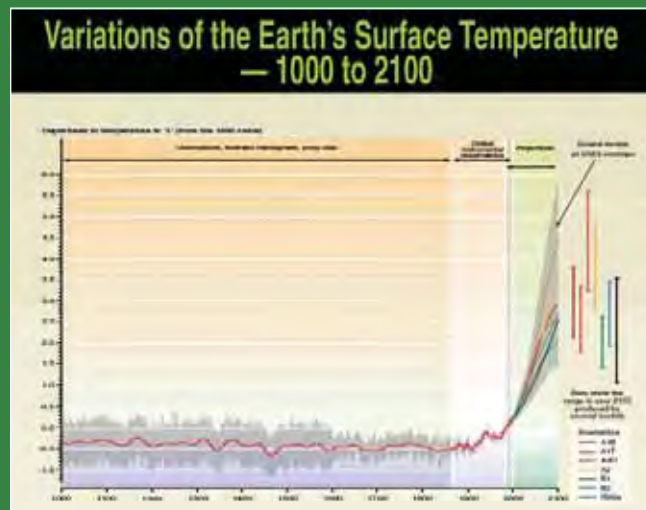
On the chart above, red dots indicate increased temperatures and blue dots decreased temperatures.

It is clear that temperatures have been increasing. The problem is this chart only covers 25 years, and to a climatologist 250 years is not a long time. So, while this chart may explain why intuitively global warming makes sense to a lot of people — after all, it is the experience of our lives — it just doesn't tell us much about whether this is a permanent or temporary fluctuation.



The chart above shows both total and insured damage has risen dramatically in recent years. But weather is not the sole variable in this graph. If you take an area such as Florida, which is prone to hurricanes, you see that many technological and

social changes — development of the interstate highway system, invention of air conditioning and common use of the jet plane in passenger transportation — led to substantial development. So a hurricane that would have caused no economic damage a hundred years ago and minimal damage as late as the 1980s can cause tens of billions in damage today. This doesn't disprove global warming, but it means you can't use economic losses from bad weather as a proxy for global warming either.



This graph, often referred to as the “hockey stick” graph because of its shape, is probably the most commonly made argument for global warming as a long-term trend. But it is not as persuasive as it looks. The long history of relatively stable temperature is not a temperature measurement at all. It is based on tree rings, which is in many ways problematic. First trees only grow on land and about 75 percent of the earth's surface is water, so we don't know its accuracy for the bulk of the planet.

Second, trees grow and don't grow for many reasons other than temperature, such as water availability. The mixing of scales from a tree ring measure to an actual temperature measure can be itself distorting, so we don't know what the more recent temperatures actually mean compared to old numbers.

We do know today's temperatures would include urban areas where buildings typically retain heat.

The third segment of the chart is all predictions, which vary widely, and we have no experience that would lead us to trust the veracity of the statistical models used. Weather forecasters have trouble telling us what will happen this weekend, yet we are supposed to believe they have predictions a hundred years from now down pat.

When if global warming is a long-term trend, reversing that trend is another matter entirely. The notion fresh produce has a big role to play in this is extremely questionable. **pb**

tiples, has been spreading its influence across the globe.

Two years ago, several U.S. retailers began to buy into the movement; they started pressing third-party auditors — who had traditionally

been concerned with food safety — to audit criteria focused on environmental and social aspects of operations.

It was only the great spinach crisis of fall 2006 that refocused the industry back on food

safety and pushed green issues and corporate social responsibility to the back burner.

Yet the issues remain, ready to explode all over the industry when conditions are right. What will those conditions be? It is hard to say:



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- Perhaps all that is required is for food safety to become less of a marquis issue, leaving people to focus on other concerns.

- Perhaps Tesco's U.S. arrival, with its Fresh & Easy Neighborhood Market concept ramping up in volume and forcing dozens and, in time, hundreds of vendors to meet "British" standards will tip the balance.

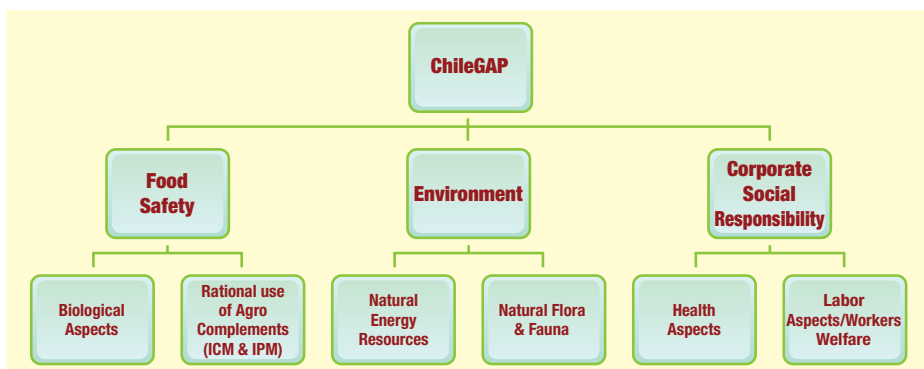
- Perhaps it will be Wal-Mart, under attack from all sides and with a CEO already showing great interest in sustainability issues, really allowing its British subsidiary — ASDA — to dominate its approach in the United States.

- Or maybe some unpredictable person, company or event will trigger a dramatic change in procurement practices.

FOOD SAFETY AS BASELINE

The green movement may simply sneak up on the industry. The world is filled with food-safety certifications that cover more than food safety. EurepGAP, for example, is the baseline grower-level food-safety program throughout Europe. Even when retailers have proprietary certifications, EurepGAP is the base.

This program is spreading. Marks & Spencer, for example, generally won't buy from



a U.S. grower/shipper, even as a fill-in for a crop failure, without at least EurepGAP certification. Some parts of the world, such as Chile and Japan, have customized versions of EurepGAP to meet local conditions. Some have urged the United States to standardize on EurepGAP.

Food safety is the carrot to move in the direction of the larger social responsibility issues. These certifications often focus on issues Americans would see as green or related to corporate social responsibility as opposed to food safety.

The graph above, adapted from the ChileGAP program, shows three inner areas of the program: food safety, environmental responsibility and corporate social responsibility.

Even the food-safety portion of the program makes mention of many things, such as integrated pest management (IPM), that seem to be

driven as much by environment as food-safety.

So as companies pursue various certifications to meet food safety requirements, they will find themselves enmeshed in green and corporate social responsibility requirements as well.

Yet the biggest beneficiary of the change in focus on the procurement end will be the area of the industry with the fewest certifications: locally grown.

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tion in the organic community. The most deeply committed organic partisans care little for the technical rules governing the National Organic Program. They are as opposed to "big organic" — Whole Foods, Earthbound Farms, Horizon Dairy — as to conventional producers.

They dream of a world in which agriculture is local, preserving local green space, farmed by families and thus preserving the yeoman farmer and biodiverse — the antithesis of large fields of spinach or romaine needed to keep processors working at capacity.

Those committed to this vision are far from a majority. Through highly publicized articles in national publications, they may have provided the passion and intellectual capital to encourage a focus on locally grown, but numerous other criteria are also driving this trend.

First is food safety. Last year's well publicized problems related to Natural Selection Foods and Taco Bell, both large-scale national operations, gave advocates of local an opportunity to push the notion locally grown produce is safer than that shipped in from elsewhere. This might be justified if a small farmer is more on

top of field and harvest conditions. Theoretically, in this view, Joe the farmer sees Jack the farmhand is sick and sends him home without letting him touch the product.

This is more a localvore's fantasy than a realistic assessment of food-safety practices on smaller farms. Although mixing a small amount of contaminated product

can spread contamination throughout a large processing facility's salad mix, it is true of all fresh-cuts, local or national. When it comes to bulk produce, the higher incidence of large-scale production food-safety outbreaks is mostly a statistical quirk.

Second, there is a culinary trend of chefs being much more concerned with local than organic. This was obvious from the chefs' presentations at PMA's foodservice conference; it grows out of the cultural predilections of chefs and the business imperatives of white tablecloth restaurants.

Small scale and locally grown are a competitive advantage for high-end restaurants. When a menu says the chef has searched out the best local growers and artisan producers of fresh

produce, cheeses, poultry, etc., it is a form of valued-added that large chains and home cooks have trouble competing with.

So the culinary culture has jumped on the local agriculture movement.

Third, retailers are seeing local as a business tool. The great dilemma for supermarkets is how to compete when the Wal-Mart Supercenter and warehouse clubs are price leaders. The answer is to focus on perishables and organics — to be the anti-Wal-Mart.

This advice makes sense only if stores can use these products to differentiate themselves from less expensive competitors. The theory is they should focus on perishables where the competition moves beyond price to quality and assortment. Retailers have seized upon local because, done properly, it makes price comparisons difficult and allows differentiation.

Ironically, conscious of its scope, eager to ingratiate itself with the local community and looking to curry favor with local legislators so influential on real estate matters, Wal-Mart has one of the most aggressive local programs.

Yet this demonstrates the appeal of locally grown to a retailer. Every retailer can have locally grown and be distinct because each can have a different grower and each chain can promote its unique way of identifying the growers.

Fourth, consumer perceptions of organic are

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changing. After many years in which consumers showed ignorance over organic standards — often thinking organically grown meant grown without any fertilizer, pesticide, etc. — more recent studies indicate a growing recognition organic means grown without synthetic substances. This creates a dynamic in which the environmental or health impact of non-synthetic substances must be compared with synthetic substances in growing conventional produce.

The more consumers perceive organic as using substances in the production process, the more they are likely to accept synthetic substances used in local growing as no big deal.

Fifth, and most important, concern about global warming drives the focus on locally grown product. There is little controversy over recent warmer temperatures but much controversy over the extent and meaning. Is it the start of a permanent change? Is it the beginning of a long-term trend? If so, to what degree is it a man-made change? If it is, can it be reversed? Is produce a significant contributor to the problem and can it be a significant part of the solution?

These are all important questions (See *Is Climate Change Real?* on page 16) but, for industry purposes, it may not make any difference if the science on global warming proves accurate or not — we may all be dead before we know.

What is clear is that the split in the organic

community can be seen as running along this fault line: Those whose interest in organics is principally motivated by environmental concerns now find themselves confronted with the need to make a decision. If, for example, they live in Philadelphia and are looking to buy apples, are they better serving the environment by insisting on organic, perhaps trucking them from Washington state, or by buying locally grown product, perhaps grown with some synthetic chemicals but grown within a day's drive from Philadelphia?

Because interest in the environment incorporates a desire to maintain local open space and because the focus of environmental concern has switched from chemicals to carbon emissions, more people are saying local is their first priority. Many would prefer produce both locally grown and organic, but if they must choose, local is increasingly the first choice.

NEW PARADIGM OF PROCUREMENT

The focus on green issues and corporate social responsibility has its epicenter in the United Kingdom. It is not principally about produce. It encompasses sustainable fisheries, ani-

mal welfare, respect for the environment, making a difference in the community, packaging initiatives, transport issues and treating suppliers well, including helping them help their employees and local communities.

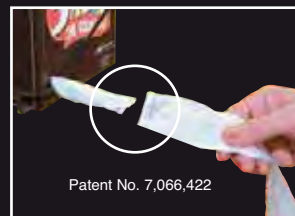
Looked at from a business perspective, the initiatives can be seen as attempts by U.K. supermarkets to fit the new paradigm of procurement. When it is so hard to differentiate oneself by product, price and service, the proposal is to give people an opportunity to fulfill more than their product needs by electing to shop with a particular store. It is a change predicted by Maslow's hierarchy of needs: As our material needs are satisfied, we are free to reach for deeper kinds of satisfaction and meaning.

This reverberates down the supply chain; retailers can improve continuously on a range of green and social issues by taking credit for their suppliers' improvements, one reason why the mandate in most certifications for "continuous improvement" has to be taken seriously.

Both the media and retailers are presenting U.K. customers with initiatives to inspire greenness and social responsibility. Food miles — a calculation of the distance an item has traveled, with the assumption it is a useful proxy for the stress the item imposes on the environment — was the first phase. Experts quickly recognized it as oversimplification. Is growing bananas in a

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local heated greenhouse more environmentally friendly than shipping them in from the tropics?

This has led to an attempt to present consumers with more complete data, often referred to as a carbon footprint, which attempts to ascertain the carbon output involved in the production and distribution of an item. Each item could have a sticker or sign to inform consumers of the amount of carbon their purchase caused to be produced.

Many efforts are underway to standardize this calculation, but they are inherently subjective. If a passenger aircraft can fly without handling freight — but takes freight anyway — what percentage of the carbon output of that flight ought the freight to carry? Whether you believe you take total weight of passengers, luggage and freight and divide by the carbon output of the flight or you take the additional output caused by cargo and divide that much smaller number by the cargo pounds is a matter of choice — yet the choice of calculation shows a significant effect on the carbon footprint of an item.

Airfreight itself is another overly simplistic example of concern for the environment, with some retailers putting airplane stickers on air-freighted items. The airplane warns consumers that buying this item will hurt the environment, although airplane delivery tells almost nothing about an item's impact on the environment.

One of the more innovative concepts being tried is 'box initiatives.' Rather than choose their own produce, consumers voluntarily get a weekly "surprise" box of produce. This allows farmers to grow a bio-diverse group of crops, focusing on horticultural needs rather than consumer preference.

If consumers buy the box, throw out the rutabagas and then buy oranges, the effort might result in higher carbon output than if consumers just bought what they wanted to begin with.

BURDEN ON SUPPLIERS

The supply base is being pressured to make progress in packaging, carbon emissions, other environmental areas, treatment of labor and sustainable horticultural factors.

Vendors are being required to produce many impact studies. U.K. law requires British retailers to publish annual reports on these issues, and, in turn, they press vendors to do the same. There is greater demand for certifications and initiatives to increase the availability of local production. It all puts enormous pressure on the supply base. However, vendors also have stronger grounds to object to poor treatment

because, typically, retailers are also accepting a responsibility to "fair deal" with vendors.

We are still discovering what green and social responsibility will really mean. There are many unresolved internal contradictions. How do we measure the importance of highly sophisticated and expensive food safety systems and expertise — only available at large scale, centralized facilities — versus the desire for locally grown product? How do we judge the importance of less transportation of product, especially by air, with the need to create opportunities for trade in developing countries? How will the issue of organic vs. locally grown shake out?

Much is still up in the air. What is clear, however, is that the nature of procurement is shifting and whether one sells on a trade level or to the consumer, the evaluation process is shifting from price, product and service to the nature of the vendor.

In an age where you either have good product and good services or go out of business, the question is increasingly this: Is your company the kind of organization buyers will feel good about working with? Put another way: Does your organization hold true to values so strong that others will aspire to work with you?

Green is not just about what you do; it is about who you are. Procurement will never be the same again. **pb**

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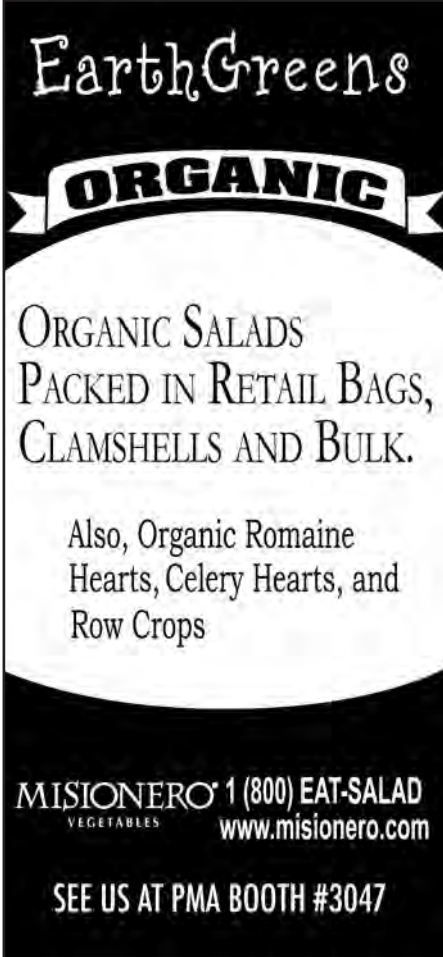
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Green Grows Up

Environment and ethics are stirring up industry changes.

BY DUANE CRAIG

Businesses have always cast a watchful eye on that single bottom line called profit. But dynamics at play during the last half-century — from the 1960s when a growing awareness of human effects on the environment emerged to the more recent spotlight on global marketing that is illuminating every corner of businesses' operations — are now causing many businesses to watch multiple bottom lines. These other bottom lines, which go by the names of environment and ethics, are increasingly being placed under the banner of corporate social responsibility (CSR).

According to a 2005 report by the U.S. Government Accountability Office, there are 12 U.S. agencies with more than 50 federal programs, policies and activities that are involved with endorsing, facilitating, partnering and mandating CSR activities. In its efforts to help companies with their CSR initiatives, Canada offers, among other things, a guide to implementing a CSR plan.

There is not a universally embraced CSR definition but, in practice, companies seem to be using the title to blend together their economic, social and environmental business

aspects — the so-called triple bottom line

"It seems to me that the highest level of this discussion is social responsibility," says Bill Bishop, president of Willard Bishop Consulting Ltd. in Barrington, IL. "Issues such as sustainability are subordinate to that. I think the big issue that produce retailers are living with is the question of increased social responsibility and how to respond to that in all of its forms. Some of it is fair trade, some of it is sustainability, some of it is carbon footprint; there are the social justice issues, but I think what's becoming evident is that the whole area of social responsibility is

moving from something that business, and the produce business in particular, once saw as important but optional, to what consumers are increasingly going to make an integral part of our performance — at least some consumers will."

Bishop Consulting was scheduled to complete a white paper on sustainability this summer for the International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association (IDDBA) in Madison, WI. Though the report will ultimately focus on the impact of social responsibility for supermarket dairies, delis and bakeries, there will be important insight that can be translated to produce policies.



CHALLENGES SPAN THE INDUSTRY

It is not just retail that will be challenged, claims Fried DeSchouwer, vice president of sales for Pan American Foods, a joint venture between BC Hothouse in Surrey, BC, Canada and Greenhouse Produce in Vero Beach, FL. "It should be a supplier-driven program," he says. "Shippers and grower/shippers need to start

qualifying and quantifying their efforts in social responsibility areas." This, he says, can be a way for companies to differentiate themselves from the pack and a way to hand competitive advantages to their retail partners. Part of that advantage is being able to supply trusted products and services to customers.

Trust is translated into support for the business, claims Sonja Tuitele, spokesperson for Wild Oats Markets Inc., based in Boulder, CO. Even though Wild Oats does not use the term socially responsible, she says the company is founded on the mission of enhancing its customers' and employees' lives. Toward those ends, she cites sustainable agriculture, food as close to nature as it is intended to be, supporting local communities and fair trade as representing some of the company's core values. "Considering all of the things we do, I believe the primary benefit is customer loyalty," she says. "Customers will choose to support companies that are meaningful to them and have values that are aligned with their own."

Twenty years ago when Jonathan Rosenthal, managing director for Oké USA, Watertown, MA, got started in fair trade efforts, it was a novel concept, but today, he says, it has become an accepted practice. "I think the message is that corporate social responsibilities, of which fair trade is one of the strongest manifestations, are practices that are on the rise. I would encourage people to get in the game now and not wait to begin satisfying customers' desires for more ethical products."

According to the International Federation for Alternative Trade, "Fair trade is a trading partnership based on dialogue, transparency and respect, that seeks greater equity in international trade. It contributes to sustainable development by offering better trading conditions to, and securing the rights of, marginalized producers and workers, especially in the South."

Beyond products, companies are increasingly looking to their operations for answers to rising energy costs and to glean new efficiencies. Publix Supermarkets, headquartered in Lakeland, FL, was recognized recently for its efforts in sustainability. Publix received the Sustainable Large Business Best Practices Award from the Council for Sustainable Florida. Some of the initiatives that led to the award include the reduction of its electrical usage by 7 percent overall and efforts resulting in the recycling of 7,600 tons of plastic and 209,000 tons of cardboard.

At Wegmans Food Markets, based in Rochester, NY, a sustainability specialist works

to pull new opportunities from the fabric of the business. According to Jeanne Colleluori, communications specialist, Wegmans is "systematically assessing current business practices and setting priorities for action." She describes her company's efforts as identifying opportunities relative to their difficulty and time necessary to implement.

The entry by supermarket giant Tesco, headquartered in Cheshunt, Hertfordshire, England, into the U.S. market suggests there may be increasing pressure for others to at least take a first or second look at all things related to environment and social justice. The United Kingdom, from corporate boardrooms to government to citizens, has been bullish on social responsibility issues lately.

Tesco is "very socially responsible," says Dick Spezzano of Spezzano Consulting Service, Inc. in Monrovia, CA. "If Tesco is successful in the United States, I think that's going to affect pretty much everybody."

"If Tesco is successful..., that's going to affect pretty much everybody."

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Speaking solely of the environment, Sir Terry Leahy, Tesco CEO, summed up the company philosophy this way: "Too often, the debate about economic growth and environmental sustainability has been presented as an either/or. Either you have economic growth or you have environmental sustainability. I believe that this is a false choice — we can, and must, have both."

Tesco's U.S. business, named Fresh & Easy Neighborhood Market and based in El Segundo, CA, is doing things such as mobilizing a fleet of trucks that will be less demanding on the environment. The trucks feature refrigeration units that use less diesel fuel, shut off when the temperature reaches the right level and can be plugged into building power so the tractor can be turned off while in the distribution center. The trailers will have quieter roll-up doors instead of lift gates.

Another of Tesco's initiatives is the installation of a \$13 million solar electric system at its distribution center in Riverside, CA.

Other large scale produce sellers, such as Whole Foods Market Inc. in Austin, TX, and Wal-Mart Stores Inc. in Bentonville, AR, declined to comment on their initiatives but recent press releases suggest those companies are also increasingly focused on the environment and ethics issues.

LEGISLATION AND PACKAGING

In some instances, pending legislation and legislation under discussion are causing areas of the supply chain to ponder their operations.

Robert Goldstein, president of Genpro Inc. in Rutherford, NJ, a third-party logistics provider specializing in perishable commodities, emphasizes the coming federal, state and even local regulations as the next round of changes to visit the transportation sector.

"After 9/11, insurance levels increased, there was a severe driver shortage, there were equipment increases and then the fuel situation," he remembers. "Over the last couple of years, everybody has seen how to fit those changes into pricing and service and has solved their own internal supply chain delivery methods. I think they have evaluated and made significant changes in their programs to get the capacity solved. Now there's a new level coming in with increased regulation and compliance with those regulations. When a retailer is selecting a carrier, it really should be concerned about the carrier's compliance, that it is using the proper procedures and following best practices."

Goldstein cites restrictions at some terminals related to when trucks can operate their engines based upon temperature as one factor that can affect deliveries.



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The To-Do List

The implications for the retailers are they should only respond to this when there's a good business reason to do so," advises Bill Bishop, president of Willard Bishop Consulting Ltd. in Barrington, IL. "It therefore requires a strategy so people can determine how it contributes value to their company versus a reactive mode where the probability is it's going to be a cost-minimization problem. You really need to be looking at the total business to grasp the magnitude of this thing." He calls that the strategy part of the equation.

Secondly, he cites gathering data and making the data meaningful. And finally, he emphasizes applying a system to testing innovation. "The retailer needs to have some systematic way of testing innovative new things," he explains. "Most everybody will continue to sell a product that sells and will stop selling a product that isn't selling. When we first had shelf-stable prepared meals, there was no category for that stuff and you just didn't know where it was in

the store. There were a number of those brands that failed not because they were not what the customer was looking for but because the customer wasn't systematically able to see them and find them.

"Fair trade is a subject that can resonate very powerfully with certain demographics. Go into a store and where do you see fair trade mentioned? When we introduce these concepts we've got to think about them a little differently than just throwing a product up there, putting a price on it and counting the number of cases we move," he explains. "We're selling something quite different and we're building something quite different."

Sara Clow, domestic commodity manager for Pacific Organic Produce in San Francisco, CA, stresses being aggressive about telling the story and outlines how retailers are at the best place to do that. "The education cycle is the most important thing, and signage and communications put out for the customer are the best ways to help move toward a greener food system.

We do our best to help the growers sell to retailers and wholesalers. Then, with our labels, we try to educate the consumers as much as possible. But the retail level is really where there is the capability to take the ball and run with it and help the consumer understand what organic means, and what fair trade means, how it affects them and why it may cost more? I think it's at the retail level that big, big strides can be made on these initiatives."

When it comes to communicating company core values, community-focused programs are still powerful tools. Ed Odrón, owner of Produce Marketing and Consulting Services in Stockton, CA, talks highly of community involvement programs as integral to a store's persona.

Odrón is a former, long-time supermarket employee, who mentions activities such as employee scholarships, charity marathons and team sponsorship as ways "to promote the supermarket within the community — as a very conscientious part of the community."

pb



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Sometimes portions of an industry highlight seemingly small issues that really have a large footprint. Take all of those wooden shipping pallets for example.

"The issues that we are confronted with in the wooden-pallet and container industry are those that address the protecting of our forests," says Bruce Scholnick, president of National Wooden Pallet & Container Association in Alexandria, VA. "One of the things that has occurred over the past number of years is that any number of invasive species, particularly those species from China like the emerald ash borer, or the Asian longhorned beetle or the wood wasp, have shown up and have begun to eat our forests. The food and agricultural organization of the United Nations has formed a treaty organization called the International Plant Protection Convention, which has been signed by 164 countries. What that has done is establish some standards for the effective treating of solid wood packaging material to try and eliminate the invasion of these species." He says the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has quarantined the shipment of ash wood from Illinois, Ohio, Michigan, and Indiana. The wooden pallet industry has responded by treating all pallets, including other wood species, regardless of destination, international or domestic.

OPPORTUNITIES ABOUND

One approach involves viewing issues and challenges as opportunities. In general, those in the produce industry, and those who watch it, see big changes coming in the years ahead.

Willard Bishop's Bishop sees the commodity nature of produce contributing to a potential sea change in how produce is grown, handled, shipped, bought and sold. "This has the makings, over probably a generation, of changing a whole bunch about the way produce is handled," he says. He cites the continued focus on visibility throughout the chain and on traceability as two driving factors. He believes the issues under the social responsibility umbrella are opportunities and how companies respond to them may be predictable.

He focuses on organics as an example. "Organics translate into something with a lot of the same characteristics which is that all of a sudden, certain attributes besides the variety and price and USDA grades turn out to be important. I would look at how retailers have responded to organics as an indication of how they're going to respond to social responsibility. I think the answer is there's a big distance among the members of the pack. Some have been very leading edge, some are in the middle and some are lagging."

Kathy Means, vice president of government

relations and public affairs for the Produce Marketing Association (PMA) in Newark, DE, thinks CSR emphasis is only going to intensify. "First of all, it's a good thing to talk about," she says, referring to high-profile people talking about the environment and to the buzz in the press as indications that people are waking up to these issues. Addressing social responsibility issues can

actually lead to efficiencies in the systems, adds Means. For example, keeping product colder for food safety reasons could also have the additional benefit of keeping it fresher longer, thereby reducing shrink. She also believes stronger traceability systems could allow companies to find advantages throughout the chain relative to increasing product movement efficiencies, ordering and fulfillment advantages

Addressing social responsibility issues can actually lead to efficiencies in the systems.



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and freshness, along with safety. Addressing these issues helps with a company's public image, she says but quickly adds that taking action strictly for public image benefit can backfire because it "can be seen through in a heartbeat."

Global, informal, online polls are not scientific, but they do influence public opinion; results from one poll show there just may be a certain amount of cynicism about companies' efforts in environmental stewardship. The results of a poll at the Web site of Mallen Baker, the development director for Business in the Community in London England, a consortium of 700 companies committed to improving

their positive impact on society, show 27 percent of respondents think recent announcements by "big supermarkets about environmental practices are nothing but cynical public relations;" 45 percent considered them small steps with much more effort needed; and 28 percent viewed them as a real shift toward sustainability.

Even as customers expect businesses to behave in certain ways, they are evolving in their beliefs. "Two years ago we did research and people didn't want to be seen as choosing organic because they were a tree hugger," says Samantha Cabaluna, director of communications for Earthbound Farm/Natural Selection

Glossary Of

CARBON FOOTPRINT

Wikipedia: A measure of the amount of carbon dioxide (CO2) emitted through the combustion of fossil fuels; in the case of an organization, business or enterprise, as part of their everyday operations; in the case of an individual or household, as part of their daily lives; or a product or commodity in reaching market. In materials, it is essentially a measure of embodied energy, the result of life cycle analysis.

Carbonfootprint.com: A Carbon Footprint is a measure of the impact human activities have on the environment in terms of the amount of greenhouse gases produced, measured in units of carbon dioxide.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR)

Investorwords.com, billed as the biggest, best investing glossary on the Web: The idea that businesses should not function amorally, but instead should contribute to the welfare of their communities.

U.S. Government, GAO: The term CSR is often used to refer to business efforts to address the impact of business operations on such concerns as labor, environment, and human rights.

Canadian Government: While CSR does not have a universal definition, many see it as the private sector's way of integrating the economic, social, and environmental imperatives of their activities. As such, CSR closely resembles the business pursuit of sustainable development and the triple bottom line. In addition to integration into corporate structures and processes, CSR also frequently involves creating innovative and proactive solutions to societal and environmental challenges, as well as collaborating with both internal and external stakeholders to improve CSR performance.

FAIR TRADE

As widely accepted and advanced by international trade organizations and referred to as the FINE definition — Fair-trade Labelling Organisations International (FLO), International Federation for Alternative Trade (IFAT), Network of European World shops (NEWS!) and European Fair Trade Association (EFTA): A trading partnership, based on dialogue, transparency and respect, that seeks greater equity in international trade. It contributes to sustainable development by offering better

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trading conditions to, and securing the rights of, marginalized producers and workers — especially in the South. Fair Trade organizations (backed by consumers) support producers, raise awareness and campaign for changes in the rules and practice of conventional international trade.

PerishablePundit.com: A fair-trade program allows people and regions that are not competitive producers of products to keep producing them.

FOOD MILES

Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture at Iowa State University: Food miles are the distance food travels from where it is grown to where it is ultimately purchased or consumed by the end user.

BBC: Food miles are the measure of the distance a food travels from field to plate.

Green Movement

Wikipedia: A political movement which advocates goals common to Green parties, including environmentalism, sustainability, nonviolence, and social justice concerns.

Westburn Publishers Ltd.: A social movement akin to consumerism which is concerned about the impact of consumption on the natural environment and particularly the use or destruction of non-renewable resources. Pollution and waste disposal/recycling are high on the 'green' agenda. In some countries like Germany the green activists have formed a political party and have a significant impact on government policy.

Freedictionary.com: A supporter of a social and political movement that espouses global environmental protection, bioregionalism, social responsibility, and nonviolence.

SUSTAINABILITY

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: Sustainability refers to the ability of an ecosystem to maintain a defined/desired state of ecological integrity over time.

Sustainabletable.org: The ability to provide for the needs of the world's current population without damaging the ability of future generations to provide for themselves. When a process is sustainable, it can be carried out over and over without negative environmental effects or impossibly high costs to anyone involved. **pb**

Foods in San Juan Bautista, CA. "They didn't want it to mean they were members of any particular social movement. Today, I still think the personal, health reasons for choosing organic are the driving factors, but I think there's a lot more awareness about the environmental benefits of personal choice. I think the environmental impact of personal choices will continue to grow for everybody in every industry."

As discussion increases and debates begin raging, some people see a danger point emerging where there are no common definitions. "I think it's very important for brand owners to understand how those companies [that are

offering solutions] have been certified or what kinds of processes they've gone through to make the claims they're making," cautions David Stanton, brand manager, Minnetonka, MN-based NatureWorks LLC, makers of biodegradable NatureWorks PLA. "There is terminology being used in the marketplace that isn't really clearly defined and there are companies using that grayness to their advantage, especially when it comes to being green and being more environmentally friendly."

According to Krysten Hommel, marketing and business development for Markon Cooperative in Salinas, CA, Markon has a measured

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Earth-Friendly Produce Packaging Goes Mainstream

By Amy Shannon and Duane Craig



According to the Corrugated Packaging Alliance, packages with this symbol are certified recyclable.

Consumers continue to demand products packaged in earth-friendly material and retailers realize the monetary rewards recycling can provide.

Experts say more and more packaging companies are teaming up with major brand owners to create products that make a positive impact on the environment and sustainability.

"It's a hot topic nationally and in Western Europe right now," says Jim Scattini, director of new business development for Watsonville, CA-based **Sambrailo Packaging**, a supplier and distributor of packaging for agricultural commodities. "We're not packaging with the same materials we used 30 years ago or 15 or 10 years ago."

For instance, many companies are trying to get away from using wax boxes, says Oscar Katov, marketing communications consultant at Birmingham, AL-based OK Communications, Inc., which represents **Weyerhaeuser Paper Co.**, Federal Way, WA. "The wax box has really been a dilemma for many, many years because it doesn't recycle," he explains. "The produce industry, together with the supermarket industry, has been looking for the so-called silver bullet to get rid of the wax box."

The corrugated industry has introduced a new standard for returning the boxes to pulp and recycle them, he adds. The new wax alternative boxes can be recycled, meaning more recycling cash and cost avoidance in terms of disposal. It also means fewer corrugated boxes are going into landfills.

As an alternative to wax boxes and Styrofoam containers, Parlier, CA-based **Maxco**, which specializes in fresh produce packaging, particularly products that are recyclable and good for the environment, has developed a line of recyclable, non-wax containers and assembly equipment for packaging strawberries and other produce, according to Mark Flaming, vice president of operations and sales. The company also manufactures clamshell and display-ready boxes for packaging citrus.

"Our focus is to come up with the most sustainable products that are good for the environment," Flaming explains. "A lot of it has to do with the end users — the consumers. They are wanting more environmentally friendly packaging."

Scattini agrees, noting, "We want to head in the direction of promoting environment-friendly packaging because we feel it is the right thing to do and because it's the direction our customers want us to go."

Sambrailo works closely with cardboard companies and distributes clamshell packaging made from recycled PET that are used for berries and other produce. "Big retailers are pointing in the direction of becoming more green, and we're going to be at the forefront of that," he adds.

"Consumers are wising up and retailers are starting to demand improvements. Using annually renewable resources is key right now," relates Rich Eichfeld, vice president of business development at **Plastic Suppliers**, Columbus, OH.

Plastic Suppliers manufactures and distributes several lines of plastic films used for packaging applications in the produce industry. Its newest product, EarthFirst, is a PLA-based film made

from corn, a 100 percent annually renewable resource. In the produce industry, it is used to manufacture label face stock, shrink sleeve film, floral wrap and flexible packaging, Eichfeld explains.

Beyond satisfying consumer demands, Maxco's Flaming adds that using environment-friendly materials can also provide retailers with a revenue stream if they invest in a recycling program.

According to Ross Riedinger, vice president of sales and marketing for **Keyes Fibre**, Wenatchee, WA, "Practicing sustainability makes good business sense." Keyes is the maker of Spring Cushion, a molded fiber tray used to pack apples, avocados, berries and a variety of citrus.

Riedinger says the company uses a recycle program that allows packers to sell the recyclable material back to Keyes. "It's taking products that still have value and making another valuable product," he says.

David Stanton, brand manager for Minnetonka, MN-based **NatureWorks LLC**, says earth-friendly packaging is also a great way for brand owners to differentiate their product from competitors. NatureWorks' polymers are used for packaging applications, such as high-value films used to wrap lettuce and other leafy greens.

"We sometimes focus so much on marketing the fresh fruit inside the packaging that we never talk about the package itself," he says. "It's important to take that one extra step to really develop quality packaging that supports the environment."

Shannon Boase, president of **Earthcycle Packaging Ltd.**, Vancouver, BC, Canada, agrees with Stanton and points out the importance of taking a position on environmental aspects. "We are a driver of change and a driver of an environmental product. Consistency is the key. You have to be consistent in all aspects of your business for the consumer to trust you. The consumer has to believe that what you're telling them is true."

Earthcycle's sustainable packaging is made from palm fiber. This renewable resource is actually a waste product that is discarded when palm fruit is harvested throughout the year for its oil.

Waverly Plastics, Waverly, IA, has a similar philosophy on producing consumer-packaging products, as exemplified by its newest earth-friendly innovation. Part of its Grocery Packaging System product line, Tug & Tote individually dispenses 100 percent renewable and biodegradable plastic bags to consumers for use in the produce department.

"We're very concerned about the environment," says Rose Nieuwenhuyzen, Waverly's president and CEO. "We're addressing two important issues here -- the environment and sanitation concerns. Not only are the bags biodegradable and recyclable, but they are also totally confined in a box, so each bag will not be touched until the consumer is ready to use it. This prevents contamination."

Nieuwenhuyzen says the new product will be introduced at the Produce Marketing Association's (PMA, Newark, DE) upcoming Fresh Summit convention and exposition in Houston, TX. The bags will be available for sale in mid-October.

pb

approach to issues of social responsibility in order to keep things clear. "We are only going to start talking about socially responsible when we have set up specific, measurable and verifiable criteria," she notes. "So although we respect any efforts that folks are making to do the right thing, we don't want to talk about them in vague terms. So once we can identify those specific, measurable and verifiable criteria that we feel comfortable asking of our supply chain, we will do that and make that known." She says Markon is currently looking at where inefficiencies can be removed from its systems and from those of its suppliers.

PRIORITIES

There is no shortage of issues for businesses to become aware of and for which to begin formulating plans. Across the produce industry, food safety continues being the initiative at the top of the list.

"The one thing I think that's high on the consumers list is food safety," says Ed Odrón, owner of Produce Marketing and Consulting Services in Stockton, CA. "The supermarket needs to have a good program that puts a lot of responsibility on the growers they're doing business with. But you just can't put it all on the growers. I think the retailer has to take on its own responsibility."

"Everything we're discussing has to have — right at the head of the list — food safety and wholesomeness — and that's Job One ahead of everything else," says Willard Bishop's Bishop. "For a long time we assumed that was in place but now we see that sometimes it isn't. Food safety is like convenience — never discount it."

Once the food supply is safe, other issues rise to the top. "The issue I hear about everywhere I go more than anything else is local," says PMA's Means. "It is about supporting local folks like small growers and family farms and it is also the issue of food miles. How far does it travel to get where it's going and how much energy is it using versus having centralized production? Some people are saying if you are buying far away but it is supporting emerging or less-developed countries, this may be a better way to support those countries' growth than providing aid. Or by supporting legitimate industry you keep it out of the drug trade. It's not always in the guise of sustainability or social responsibility — it is sometimes just in the guise of fresher and closer. But eventually, the talk does turn to lower transportation costs and the feeling that it's fresher, more healthful and supports local agriculture."

"One of the more recent things is the local phenomenon," confirms Frank McCarthy, vice president of marketing for Albert's Organics,



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Inc., based in Bridgeport, NJ. "It's a combination of two things — one being the presumption it is fresher and the other is the concept of food miles."

"It's going to be increasingly difficult to defend production practices with a large carbon footprint," Bishop of Willard Bishop explains. "That is resonating in Western Europe and in Asia as well as from here. I'm pretty convinced now that most of the social change that occurs is not going to happen as the result of some kind of logical deliberation, it's just a series of tectonic plates that push up against each other."

"I think it's very clear what the biggest challenge is going to be," says Joan Dye Gussow, nutritionist, author and professor, who is noted for her advocacy of buying local. "It's going to be energy. We can't afford to send our food all over the world, particularly produce. Produce is vulnerable. So you have a cold chain, which costs energy, and then you have to ship it fast, which costs energy. I think the whole produce market is going to have to adjust to this and it's going to be a different world. And it isn't even

going to be a question of being green; it will be a question of being able to survive."

"It's going to be increasingly difficult to defend production practices with a large carbon footprint."

**Bill Bishop
Willard Bishop
Consulting Ltd.**

Mayra Velazquez de Leon, president of Organics Unlimited, San Diego, CA, sees increasing pressure on growers coming from the rising tide of organic consumers. "When you talk to buyers, they don't care where you get the product. They don't care about anything but having the product where they want it on time, with a certification." The price demands run counter to the reality of growing organic produce, and filling the quantities demanded makes the growers feel quite a bit of pressure, she continues. The upside, she says, is that more people are being introduced to organics because the products are more affordable.

She believes the growing organic demand should not be allowed to divert people from the very core of what organic means. "I don't think people have always related organic with social responsibility until lately. I think that started with fair trade. More than anything, that was

a marketing tool. Growing organic has to be hand-in-hand with social responsibility."

Oké USA's Rosenthal uses fair trade as an example of the change in thinking people will have to undergo in an era of heightened emphasis on social responsibility. "How do we incorporate fair-trade practices into all levels and all aspects of the food industry?" he asks. "In the fresh produce industry the biggest issue is how do you incorporate those practices and values and still have a viable industry. It's a challenge because it's a change of thinking for most people. Whereas traditionally a buyer is looking at how to pay the lowest price, in fair trade there are certain minimum prices that are dictated by the rules, and the whole system is set up so there's a real partnership between the grower and the buyers. The biggest challenge for many people is to change their thinking about what it means to buy and sell. They would be trying to create a win-win as opposed to just a win for themselves."

Organics is one example where the payoff to earlier efforts at creating socially and environmentally responsible industry is being realized. "Until relatively recently if you were an organic producer, you had to do a lot of convincing to get retailers to carry your products," says Earthbound Farm's Cabaluna. "It's a relatively new phenomenon that organic is being more actively sought out."

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19th Annual Marketing Excellence Awards

This year's Marketing Excellence Awards winners cover a wide array of promotional concepts. Some are aimed at consumers, others at retailers. Some promote the bounty of a specific state, others the value of going "green." Still others aim to increase the amount of fresh produce children eat or the variety of specialty produce that adults eat.

What they all share is a vision of produce as a fundamental part of the American diet. With the growing epidemic of obesity in this country, the produce industry is in the unprecedented position of providing the one food category whose increase is beneficial to everyone. Substituting fresh fruits and vegetables for high-fat, high-calorie snacks and meal components is a goal no one can dispute.

PRODUCE BUSINESS is proud to recognize these organizations, presented in alphabetical order, for their contributions to the American marketplace.

—By Jan Fialkow



2007 Winners

- ★ Campari Marketing Group
- ★ Capurro Farms
- ★ Colorado Department of Agriculture
- ★ Columbia Marketing International (CMI)
- ★ Frieda's, Inc./Schnucks
- ★ Melissa's/World Variety Produce
- ★ New Jersey Department of Agriculture
- ★ North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services
- ★ Idaho Potato Commission
- ★ Ocean Mist Farms
- ★ Stemilt
- ★ Sunrise Growers
- ★ Tanimura & Antle

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Deadline for 2008 entries, June 6, 2008

CAMPARI MARKETING GROUP, Chicago, IL

One Hot Tomato Valentine's Day Promotion

Objectives: Raise awareness of Campari tomatoes in key markets by generating media coverage in broadcast media outlets.

Description: Campari tomatoes were delivered to local meteorologists in five markets and suggested as a topic for their Valentine's Day weather forecast, along with talking points. With snow and rain in many of the cities' forecasts, CMG positioned Campari as "one hot tomato" for Valentine's Day and the perfect ingredient for a romantic dinner.

Results: Multiple stations featured the tomatoes and two in New York, WABC and WCBS, kept the baskets of Campari tomatoes on camera for several minutes. The combined estimated audience for those two airings alone totaled more than ¼ million viewers. During February, Campari tomatoes generated more than \$1.3 million in total sales, an increase of 11.9 percent compared to January sales.



CAPURRO FARMS, Moss Landing, CA

Capurro Farms Packaging

Objectives: Position the company as a leader in the produce industry by offering consumers convenient, more usable product as well as promote a stronger image of food safety to consumers by using 100 percent degradable packaging.

Description: BOUQUET GREENS: Wrapped in environmentally friendly, see-through material and featuring Capurro's new logo. The product is designed to stand up vertically, presenting an attractive, clean and easy-to-identify presentation of greens. VALUE-ADDED: Convenient, environmentally friendly packaging allows consumers to grab-and-go. The new logo's illustrations evoke the fruit and vegetable box labels of yesteryear.

Results: The new packaging has been well received by retailers. The new packaging has improved consumer satisfaction and increased sales and margins.



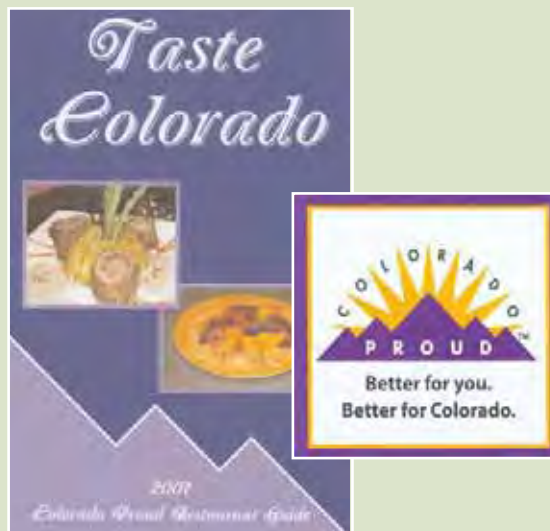
COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, Lakewood, CO

2006/2007 Colorado Proud Campaign

Objectives: Increase consumer awareness of the *Colorado Proud* program and logo.

Description: The media campaign included TV ads; *Just Picked!* newsletter; 130 years, 130 Recipe Contest; Mystery Match-Up competition at the State Fair; *Colorado Proud* School Meal Day; and six booths at WestEx 2007. Promotional materials include *Colorado Products Available Here* window decals, shelf-talkers and POS Signs. Each month *Colorado Proud* sent a press release with a recipe featuring an in-season Colorado commodity. In January, the *Colorado Proud Restaurant Guide* was published. Each restaurant received a *Proudly Serving Colorado* Cuisine window decal and menu decals.

Results: *Colorado Proud* and participating sponsors ran 718 ads and reached 97.3 percent of households an average 24.9 times and 96.6 percent of adults 25-54 an average 12.3 times. The campaign totaled 34,254,000 household impressions and 19,863,000 adults 25-54 impressions. The :30 ad won the 2006 Colorado Broadcaster's Association Award for Excellence for Best Commercial Advertising Spot for an Advertiser, Any Length.



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COLUMBIA MARKETING INTERNATIONAL (CMI)

Wenatchee, WA

Ambrosia — Mother Nature's Newest Inspiration

Objectives: Introduce a new apple variety to consumers and give retailers an attractive, easy-to-use way to display this unique, limited-production apple variety.

Description: CMI created high-impact in-store sales materials that included a full-color shipper, high-graphic display carton, posters, rack cards and recipes. Shippers, which included 100 recipe cards, one poster and one rack card, were then distributed to the retailers. Each shipper included four Euro boxes filled with Ambrosia apples, which are grown exclusively in the United States by CMI.

Results: Retailers set up the display and saw a lift in their apple categories. Retailers created massive, creative displays using the shippers and POS materials. They also ran demos and included Ambrosia apples in their newspaper advertising. Consumers asked for more Ambrosia apples, thus creating more requests by the retailers.



FRIEDA'S, INC. AND SCHNUCK MARKETS, INC.

Los Alamitos, CA

St. Louis, MO

Frieda's Produce University Promotion At Schnucks

Objectives: Educate consumers and produce managers on Frieda's specialty produce. Increase specialty produce sales at store level during the promotion. Obtain residual increase in sales following the promotion. Increase customer service skills of all produce personnel.

Description: Frieda's Produce University, a training seminar to prepare, educate and train produce managers on specialty produce items, took place on April 19, 2007. On May 19, 2007, an in-store merchandising event was held in 101 Schnucks and Logli stores. The event included produce managers who interacted with consumers, in-store demos, a consumer giveaway (*The Purple Kiwi Cookbook*), supporting POS signage, and local radio and TV advertising.

Results: TRAINING SEMINAR: 105 Schnucks/Logli produce managers attended. IN-STORE EVENT: 28 specialty items were featured; during the 2-week promotion period (May 14 & 21), specialty produce sales increased 170 percent and 115 percent over the same time period last year (LY). A spillover during the week of May 28 delivered a 79 percent increase over LY. Nearly 26,000 pounds of specialty produce items were sold during the three weeks, 124 percent increase over LY.

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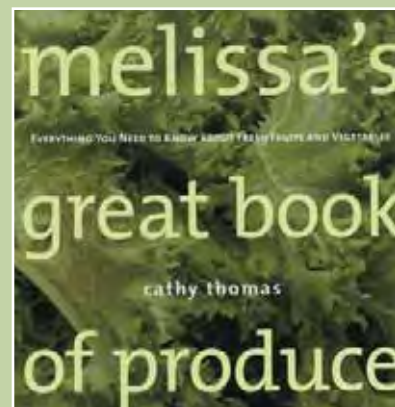
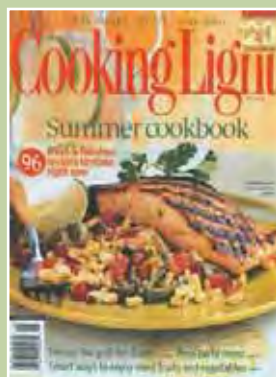
MELISSA'S/WORLD VARIETY PRODUCE, Vernon, CA

Publicity For *Melissa's Great Book Of Produce*

Objectives: Expanding the reach of consumer publicity for the *Melissa's Great Book Of Produce* via local and national newspapers, magazines radio shows and the Web.

Description: Food writers and editors of local and national circulated media were pitched the value of *Melissa's Great Book Of Produce*, showing how it can be used as a reference guide and culinary guide and how it can help them educate their readers/viewers.

Results: In a 12-month period (June 2006 to May 2007), there were 703 articles recorded by BurrelleLuce clipping with over 17- million in circulation.



NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, Trenton, NJ

Fresh Spinach — Restoring The Public's Confidence

Objectives: Inform the public of the lifting of the 2006 ban on fresh spinach and of the safety of New Jersey grown spinach, encourage purchase of locally grown spinach and greens and re-establish the spinach market in New Jersey after the ban.

Description: On Saturday, Sept. 23, 2006, the spinach ban was lifted except for three counties in California. In the next few days, an NJDA press release was sent to news agencies and trade personnel. Over 75 radio stations in the New York and Philadelphia media markets received a recorded :30 public service announcement (PSA) announcing the lifting of the ban and the safety of spinach grown in New Jersey. A print ad was sent to the four most widely read newspapers in the state. The ad was sent on CD-ROM to all major retailers in the state. Secretary of Agriculture Charles Kuperus and key staffers gave press interviews to local, state and national media and the Secretary recorded a :60 radio commercial.

Results: The promotion helped reach the audience and helped re-establish the spinach market by building confidence in the safety of produce grown to *Jersey Fresh* grading standards. The Produce Safety Task Force was established in December 2006; it continues working to ensure the *Jersey Fresh* produce growers are capable of complying with any new regulations.



NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & CONSUMER SERVICES, Raleigh, NC

Got To Be NC Big Cart

Objectives: Utilize the Big Cart to draw attention to the variety of NC produce and products. It serves as a powerful visual tool and as an extension of the department's successful *Got To Be NC* marketing campaign.

Description: The *Got To Be NC* Big Cart is nearly 13 feet tall and 15 feet long. It can actually be driven and holds three passengers. It is leased by the NCDACS from National Cart Co., based in St. Charles, MO, and is sponsored by five NC companies, including Hampton Farms, Severn, NC.

Results: The *Got To Be NC* Big Cart has appeared at over 100 events in nearly half the counties in the state within the last year.





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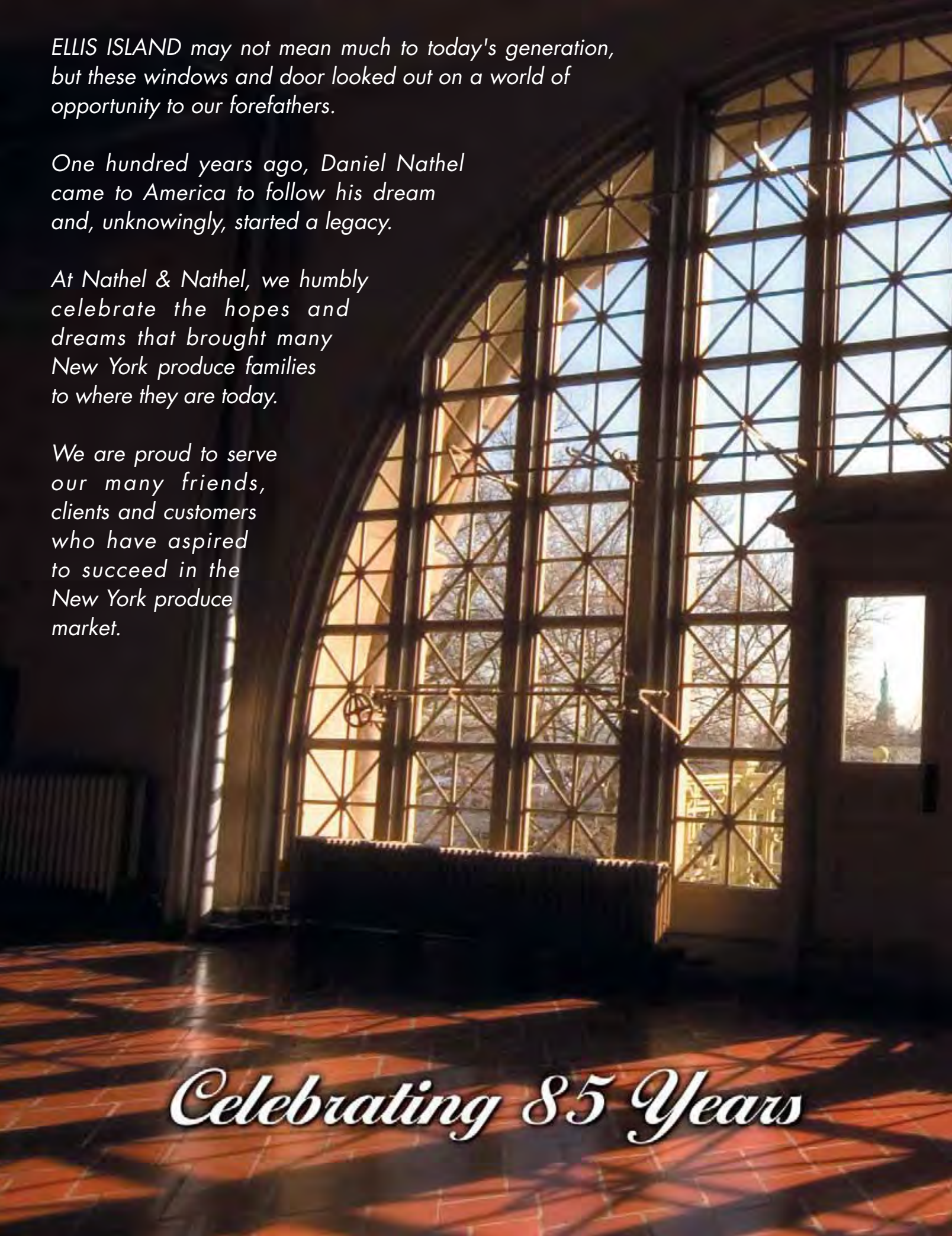
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IDAHO POTATO COMMISSION

Eagle, ID

What's Wrong With This Picture?

Objectives: Reinforce and grow the reputation of Idaho potatoes as America's highest quality, No. 1-selling potato. Increase retailer support for Idaho potatoes, thus driving volume and growing the business.

Description: A fully integrated marketing campaign that targets the retail trade, *What's Wrong With This Picture?* delivers a consistent message with a dose of entertainment. The concept shows unusual fruits and vegetables — with the *Grown in Idaho* seal — although they are obviously not grown in Idaho. The campaign included a series of four full-page ads in major trade publications, monthly e-mail blasts that mimicked the ads and a monthly mailing of a rubber "stress ball" in the shape of that month's fruit or vegetable.

Results: IPC has received an unprecedented amount of feedback from the retail trade. Recipients eagerly anticipate the stress ball of the month, and many display their collections. Though branded potato sales are not possible to track, the response from produce managers, senior category managers and retail advertising/marketing managers has been very positive.



OCEAN MIST FARMS

Castroville, CA


Artichoke Nutrition News Promotion

Objectives: Generate consumer awareness about the nutrition/health benefits of artichokes.

Description: On April 24, 2007, Ocean Mist distributed an electronic press kit to health and nutrition writers and editors at daily newspapers and wires/syndicated news services, national food and women's publications, health and nutrition Internet sites and regional women's magazines. Simultaneously, a video news package was disseminated to national and local broadcast TV media contacts, as well as a segment created just for cable TV stations watched most by women.

Results: Print and media placements during the nutrition news outreach effort totaled 3.5 million impressions. Print articles reached 2.6 million impressions and included stories in *Shape* magazine, *Self* magazine, the *New York Times*, the *Houston Chronicle* and *WedMD*. The video release reached an estimated 2 million viewers, The cable story aired 120 times on 10 networks, including Home & Garden, Lifetime, We, Discovery Health and Style.



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STEMILT, Wenatchee, WA

2006 Washington Stone Fruit Program

Objectives: Help consumers more readily identify peaches and nectarines grown in Washington by emphasizing familiar locations in the state and the tree-ripened quality unique to Washington's stone fruit industry.

Description: Stemilt designed a program to identify its fruit with Washington as its origin so consumers recognizing the Washington difference would select Washington-grown fruit. It incorporated well-known imagery from the state into tote bags and display cards. The half-totes created for the promotion gave consumers the convenience of a pre-bagged product while still allowing full visibility of the fruit. A separate promotion was created for Ingles Supermarkets, based in Asheville, NC, to attract more customers to the nectarine display. This promotion provided a Getaway Sweepstakes for a weekend at the Biltmore Estate in Asheville. Shoppers who purchased Stemilt nectarines using their customer cards were automatically entered.

Results: While this was retailer specific promotion, customized for Ingles Supermarkets, it received overwhelmingly positive responses from Ingles' executives. They noted its creativity and ability to set the Ingles stores apart from their competitors.



STEMILT, Wenatchee, WA

Stemilt/Sesame Street Apple Of The Month Club At Hannaford

Objectives: encourage kids to try new apple varieties by highlighting a different apple each month in conjunction with one of the *Sesame Street* characters.

Description: Hannaford Brothers Co., Portland, ME, ran six promotions (January through June 2007), featuring a different apple from Stemilt each month. POS materials included posters, 11x7 display cards and activity sheets for kids. All POS materials featured the Hannaford, Stemilt and *Sesame Street* Habits For Life logos. The promotions were: January — Fuji and Grover; February — Cripps Pink, Zoe and Elmo; March — Granny Smith and Oscar the Grouch; April — Braeburn and Cookie Monster; May — Cameo and Ernie; and June — Golden Delicious and Big Bird.

Results: The promotion taught kid and adults about the different varieties of apples. A similar program that can be used by many supermarket chains is under development, thanks to the positive response from Hannaford and *Sesame Street*.



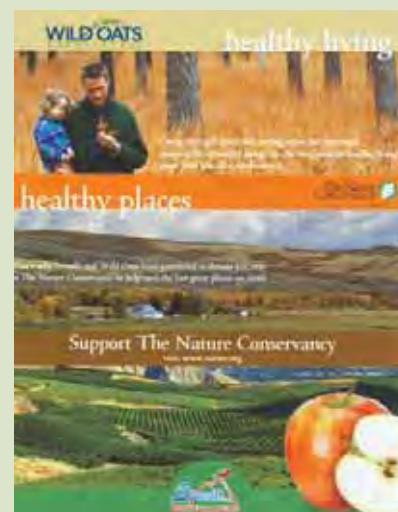
STEMILT, Wenatchee, WA

Stemilt/Nature Conservancy Program On Behalf Of Wild Oats

Objectives: Combine forces with Wild Oats Markets, Inc., based in Boulder, CO, and The Nature Conservancy, based in Arlington, VA, to create a program that supports a more healthful environment and more healthful lifestyles.

Description: Stemilt and Wild Oats mutually raised funds by promoting apples over the January-March 2007 time period to benefit The Nature Conservancy. Stemilt designed POS materials used in Wild Oats featuring the phrases: "Healthy living, Healthy places. Support The Nature Conservancy." and "Eating the right foods and staying active are important components to healthy living, but the true basis for healthy living starts with a healthy environment."

Results: The three entities benefited from working together on a program helpful to their mutually shared customer group: the organic foods shopper. Remarks and feedback following the promotion affirmed this type of collaboration is highly effective.



SUNRISE GROWERS

Placentia, CA

Strawberries Are Really Big Right Now

Objectives: Secure primary display space at produce department entry; secure additional linear footage of display space; make up for lost sales in February due to weather conditions; increase over last year strawberry sales by at least 8 percent; and provide consumers with new, guilt-free, indulgent strawberry usage ideas.

Description: March promotion — partnership with Kellogg's Smart Start; April — partnership with Keebler Ready Crust; May — partnership with T. Marzetti; and June — partnership with Entenmann's All Butter Loaf Cake. Each promotion featured its own distinct POS but had a similar look, feel and elements that held the four promotions together as a series. Select Midwest retailers ran the promotions and received a customized promotional kit. The program also included high-value in-ad coupons on strawberries and demo programs on high-traffic days.

Results: Secured primary display space at the front of the produce department in each retailer. Secured additional linear feet of display spaces versus last year, averaging four feet. Achieved additional sales necessary to make up for sales lost due to the freeze. Year-over-year sales over the promotional timeframes were up 12 to 32 percent. Delivered over 10,000 new usage ideas and collected feedback from hundreds of shoppers directly.

**TANIMURA & ANTLE**

Salinas, CA

Hit A Home Run With An Easy BLT Wedge Salad

Objectives: Reinvigorate the maturing iceberg lettuce category to build excitement and increase consumption via a Father's Day meal serving suggestion. Baseball was selected as the theme.

Description: The promotion included a display and ad contest for selected retail partners. Iceberg lettuce in a promotional package that featured the recipe along with the call to action, *Hit A Home Run With An Easy BLT Wedge Salad*, was shipped to participating retailers. Retailers were encouraged to participate with an incentive prize awarded to all entries as well as larger prizes based on the submitted ad's/display's creativity and effectiveness.

Results: Eleven selected retailers participated. Original sales volume target was 130,100; actual sold volume was 225,016, exceeding plan by 73 percent. Press generated 635 news clips; featurette had 30 placements and 679 published online. Category was reinvigorated with many retailers providing feedback, suggestions and ways to better the promotion for next year.



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Fall Merchandising Ideas

A cornucopia of produce promotions ushers in seasonal profits.

BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD

Warm up customers to the season of eating with a series of strategically planned fall produce promotions.

To accomplish this effectively, Karen Caplan, president of Frieda's, Inc., Los Alamitos, CA, recommends, "Think of fall merchandising as a crescendo that builds right through the end of the year. This means putting your basic fall set in place, then moving items in and out for specific holiday promotions. This is much more effective than trying to switch entire strategies every week or so."

FRUITS & VEGGIES — MORE MATTERS MONTH September

Good-bye 5-A-Day; Hello Fruits & Veggies — More Matters.

"Research revealed consumers felt daunted by numbers and didn't know portion size. Also, they didn't want to be preached at, scared into or made to feel guilty. *Fruits & Veggies — More Matters* is a simple, soft-sell message," explains Elizabeth Pivonka, president and CEO, Produce for Better Health Foundation (PBH), Wilmington, DE.

"We've really made a conscious effort to emphasize that all forms of fruits and vegetables count. That means fresh, frozen, canned, juice and dried. We've been working with the consumer affairs folks and registered dietitians at supermarkets to get this word out. Retailers that have a big picture mentality immediately understand the promotional and profitable opportunities," she adds.

This fall, PBH will offer the more than 50 retail chains nationwide license to use *Fruits & Veggies — More Matters*. This will include access to an updated tool kit they can download from PBH's Web site. It will provide practical information, tips, ideas and serving suggestions for fruits and vegetables and a seasonal twist.

"Retailers can use the copy and graphics in ads or to make their own customized materials such as rail strips, signage and posters," explains Bryant Wynes, PBH senior executive of retail marketing.

Several fruits and vegetables are ideal to promote as a thematic tie-in.

Bartlett, Star Crimson and Red Sensation or Red Bartlett pears arrive in September, notes Neil Galone, vice president of marketing, Diamond Fruit Growers, Hood River, OR. "This year's crop is exceptionally clean and well sized, averaging at 80s and 90s. Industry-wise, the crop is up 13 percent, meaning they'll be good promotable volumes."

Lee Anne Oxford, marketing director, L&M Companies, Inc., Raleigh, NC, adds, "Fresh fall crop new potatoes, bell peppers, cucumbers, greens and cabbage are good to promote in September."

ORGANIC HARVEST MONTH September

Organic Harvest Month is gaining momentum as retailers realize it can be a huge opportunity, says Frank McCarthy, vice president of marketing, Albert's Organics, based in Bridgeport, NJ. "For stores that carry organic produce it is a chance to



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promote product and project their image as a leader in supplying organic produce."

Tonya Antle, vice president of organic sales, Earthbound Farm, San Juan Bautista, CA, adds, "It's harvest time, so everything is available — salads, sliced apples, mini-peeled carrots, dried fruit, broccoli, celery. It's one of our best times of year."

Inside displays should reflect organics in a retailer's advertising, says Albert's McCarthy, "Large size displays in prominent positions within the department with clear signs depicting the product is organic will work well. Having the first items you see upon entering the department be organic can also be an excellent strategy."

Consumers really love recipes, notes Antle. "Make a recipe that utilizes a few different harvest-time produce items available in the produce department. Call out each item, perhaps by displaying them together. The featured items fly out the door whenever we do this in our farm-stand store."

As for advertising, McCarthy suggests, running "an across-the-board special on all organic produce, something like 10 to 15 percent off on all organic items. This type of promotion, while it may have a cost, will not be outdone by a competitor and gives your organic selection a nice price image, at least

during September."

Albert's offers a 30x72-inch banner that promotes and announces the celebration of



National Organic Harvest Month. "Any retailer who wants to use this will be sent [an electronic] file of the banner that can be taken to a local sign shop and printed on vinyl for less than \$100. When placed or hung at the entrance to the department, it is an excellent way to make sure shoppers know something special is going on," says McCarthy.

ROSH HASHANAH & YOM KIPPUR Sept. 12-14 & Sept. 21/22

Apples and the fall harvest figure prominently in the celebration of Rosh Hashanah, also known as the Jewish New Year. Apples

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Reader Service #44

New Season Market

Customers who shop at New Seasons Market, a 12-store chain based in Portland, OR, are not ready for fall until October, says produce director Jeff Fairchild. "We have a huge late summer crop of peaches and nectarines that runs into and through September. But by October, when the weather starts getting chilly, customers are ready for fall."

New Seasons themes its Saturday special events, run from 11 AM until 5 PM, around fall produce such as apples, bell peppers, mushrooms, winter squash and pumpkins. "The first weekend in October is our Apple Fest. We bring in 20 to 30 varieties of apples and set them up on large tables in the front of the store," Fairchild describes.

Bell peppers — how to roast them, sampling and a large variety on display — are the subject of another Saturday session. Another centers on displays of 12 to 15 varieties of cultivated and wild mushrooms. Samples of sautéed mushrooms are offered.

Winter squash and pumpkins star on the last Saturday of the month. "We teach customers how to cook with all the different types of winter squash, and we have a pumpkin carving demonstration going at the same time," Fairchild relates

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dipped in honey symbolize a wish for sweetness in the year ahead. New fruits of the season such as fresh dates, figs and pomegranates are also enjoyed and ideal for promotion. Yom Kippur, the Jewish Day of Atonement, is observed with a sunset-to-sunset fast, but a festive family meal usually takes place prior to beginning the fast.

According to Robert Schueller, director of public relations for Melissa's/World Variety Produce, Los Angeles, CA, notes "There are many specialty produce items that are perfect to promote for these two religious holidays. These include specialty vegetables such as hothouse cucumbers, baby beets, mini sweet peppers, edamame, Italian parsley, parsnips, butter lettuce, horseradish and Belgian endive; all types of winter squash such as Delicata, Carnival, Golden Nugget, Sweet Dumpling and Kabocha; potatoes such as Dutch Yellow, Ruby Gold and Creamers; organic fruits such as oranges, kiwi and red grapes; specialty onions and fresh herbs

such as basil, mint, dill, chive, thyme and rosemary."

MEXICAN INDEPENDENCE DAY Sept. 16



Photo courtesy of New Seasons Market

Mexican Independence Day marks the 1810 revolt led by Father Miguel Hidalgo in an attempt to break away from Spanish rule. Although it took a dozen more years for this initial effort to succeed, Sept. 16 is marked by festive meals, parties and parades.

"This holiday requires large displays of traditional Latin ingredients — jalapeños, jicama, tomatillos, garlic and dried chilies, to name a few — to meet demand as large families celebrate this fiesta together. Stock modulars with a variety of Latin items. Be sure to keep fresh stock in the backroom to refresh displays," says Schueller.

L&M's Oxford notes, "Field and Roma tomatoes are shipping out of Baja in September. Mexican limes are available, and fresh chilies, onions and corn are also abundant and ideal to feature for Mexican Independence Day-themed promotions."

New this year, Melissa's offers Guacamole and Salsa Kits. "These kits make it easy for American families to whip up fresh guacamole and salsa. All they have to do is cut or chop for five to six minutes," Schueller says.

"Set the theme with colorful signage and Latin music. For promotion and advertising, consolidate or group products together in a high traffic location on the refrigerated rack. Pile items no more than two high. Shoppers buy produce that looks good. Highlight weekly advertised items with special signs," he adds.

NATIONAL APPLE MONTH September, October and November

Fall is the peak harvest time for apples across the nation — and for the 3-month long National Apple Month.

"We recommend starting off the season by promoting Galas right away. Don't wait to build the category and then promote as this means a loss of incremental sales. After



Photo courtesy of New Seasons Market

Galas, add Red Delicious, Golden Delicious, Fuji, Braeburn, Granny Smiths into October and Pink Lady in November," says Roger Pepperl, marketing director, Sternilt Growers, Inc., Wenatchee, WA.

On the East Coast, Peter Gregg, spokesperson for the New York Apple Association (NYAA), Fishers, NY, notes, "The 'hot buzz' variety is the Honeycrisp. Our growers have planted as many as possible as they grow well in our climate. McIntosh is our bread-and-butter variety and Empire is seeing a renaissance in demand, but we'll pay extra attention this season to Jonagold and Crispin by taste sampling them in over 1,000 stores nationwide this fall."

New bin wrap and a new brochure are available from NYAA. David McClurg, vice president of marketing, explains, "The bin

Schnucks Market

The *Fruits & Veggies — More Matters* theme takes center stage in the produce departments at Schnucks Markets, a 101-store chain headquartered in St. Louis, MO. "We are very pleased that Jackie Joyner-Kersey will be back again this year as sponsor for the fifth year of our promotion. What used to be called *Get Fit with Five* will now be called *More Matters for your Health and Fitness*," says vice president of produce Mike O'Brien, who is this year's chair of the board of trustees of the Produce for Better Health Foundation (PBH), Wilmington, DE

September is an ideal time to hold such a promotion, says O'Brien, because of back-to-school. His produce departments will feature a variety of fruits and vegetables in store ads as well as build special displays with signage in-store. "We will have an educational brochure highlighting the benefits of fitness and eating fruits and vegetables. The promotion traditionally ends with a five-mile run, which this year will be held at Six Flags over Mid America."

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wrap, which depicts a colorful variety of apples grown in New York, measures 30-inches high by 13-feet long. Retailers can use it to wrap bins, skirt tables or as wallpaper for the back of displays."

The new brochure, titled *Guide to Apple Country Apples*, contains a description of New York-grown apples, usage ideas, recipes and health information. In addition, it can be affixed to a rack attached to a display-container.

According to Kay Rentzel, director of National Apple Month for the U.S. Apple Association, headquartered in Vienna, VA, "We refer retailers to their state and regional apple associations for promotional materials. We don't provide this. We do provide, however, the entry rules for the display and merchandising contest. These rules include that retailers cross-merchandise our partner's products as well as apples. This year's partners are the National Peanut Board and Kraft Caramel dip.

"Apple marketers use the National Apple Month promotion to kick off the harvest season and boost early-season shipments," she adds. "Retailers use it to increase consumer sales and awareness, yield additional profits for the produce department and creatively merchandise throughout the store."

Participating retailers vie for more than \$10,000 in prize money in categories based on store size and in a category for best health-oriented display. "Only about 5 percent of entries are in the health-oriented category, so there's lots of opportunity there," Rentzel says.

HALLOWEEN Oct. 31



Photo courtesy of Stemilt

In October retailers bring in winter squash galore, says Danny Heilman, sales manager, Dan Schantz Farm & Greenhouse, Allentown, PA. "As many as a dozen or more varieties — Sweet Dumpling, Delicata,

Kabocha, Butternut, Spaghetti, Acorn and Red Kuri, to name a few. Bin sales are big.

"The trend now is for small painted pumpkins. Consumers want happy faces, like clowns, not scary ones. Of course, we usually have a chain or two that wants a huge pumpkin for a 'guess the weight' promotion," he continues. "Don't put pumpkins on concrete or blacktop if you have them outside. These surfaces will heat up, cook the bottom of the pumpkin and cause it to rot faster. Instead, set it up on a hay bale."

In light of the childhood obesity epidemic, retailers can position naturally sweet apples, kiwifruit and pears as great trick-or-treat fare.

"Run promotions on small-sized Gala, Red Delicious or Granny Smith apples in bags," Stemilt's Pepperl advises. "Use our Sesame Street theme bins to merchandise bagged apples. The characters of farmer Elmo and Cookie Monster peeking out from behind a giant apple and exclaiming, 'Crunchy! Sweet! Fun to eat!' really catch kid's eyes."

Similarly, Diamond Growers and Yakima, WA-based apple growers/marketers, Borton & Sons, have partnered with Nickelodeon to produce bagged fruit and display-ready cartons imprinted with characters such as Sponge Bob Squarepants. The cartoon-themed bagged fruit, stacked in the themed display ready carton, says Galone, "lends itself to either a freestanding display or secondary display."

Again this year, the Milwaukie, OR-based Pear Bureau Northwest (PBN) will partner with Radio Disney for a Halloween Pear-Ade promotion. The promotion will take place at three community events in October in 20 markets nationwide. "The select retailer in each market will have its banner displayed at each community event, its tag line played on Radio Disney, and it can tie in in-store by offering coupons for pears or other promotions. It's all about driving new customers into the store," explains Dennis James, director of marketing.

California kiwi starts harvest by the first of October and plentiful supplies for promotion are available by October 15, adds John Fagundes, president, Cal Harvest Marketing, Inc., Hanford, CA. "Green is most popular, followed by gold in more limited supplies."

Kiwifruit is popular among children because of its small size, convenience, sweet taste, and colorful appearance, says Hillary Brick, vice president of marketing, Giumarra Companies, Fresno, CA. "Because of its nutritional value and year-round availability, moms love it too."

"Post signs telling consumers how to prepare kiwifruit — slice the fruit in two and

Jungle Jim's International Market

Thanksgiving is the biggest food holiday of the year. To celebrate, Jungle Jim's International Market, a single specialty store in Fairfield, OH, stocks its 1-acre produce department with items consumers want. Potatoes, sweet potatoes, yams and winter squash are massively merchandised in bushel baskets and spillover displays.

"We'll do a lot of tie-ins or cross-merchandising," says Dave Brossart, general manager for produce and floral. "For example, we'll put bags of fresh cranberries next to the bagged salads and merchandise fresh sage next to celery for making turkey stuffing."

At this time of year, Brossart likes to offer customers demos of items that are "odd, new or at their peak. For example, we'll sample pomegranates. Florida citrus is just coming in, so we'll sample the red navels, and apples are at their peak, so we'll have customers taste-test some of the less familiar varieties."

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scoop out the flesh with a spoon. Play up the eye appeal of the kiwifruit's inside by cutting a few fruit in half, sealing them in plastic wrap and scattering the halves throughout the display. Finally, sales of kiwifruit increase as much as three times when advertised," she recommends

THANKSGIVING Nov. 22



Photo courtesy of Frieda's

Thanksgiving is the biggest food holiday of the year, says L&M's Oxford. "Build big displays, secondary displays and well-stocked displays of produce."

"Items to stock up on includes several varieties of potatoes, winter squash, fresh herbs, onions, garlic and vegetables such as baby beets," adds Melissa's Schueller.

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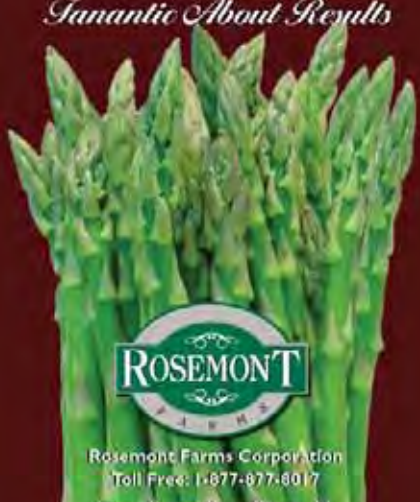
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Cub Foods

Chanhassen, MN-based Cub Foods is an 85-store chain of warehouse format stores. The entire produce team at the Green Bay, WI, store set their minds and imaginations to building an eye-popping and profitable display for last year's National Apple Month contest.

"We featured 13 different varieties of apples that accounted for more than 338 cases of apples being sold in the three weeks the store displayed apples," says produce manager Steve Hebel, who coordinated the entry. Drawing upon the excitement of the season with a tribute to the fall apple harvest and the theme, *Fall Into Healthy Snackin'*, the produce staff incorporated a number of new crop apples from Washington, Wisconsin and Michigan into the display and cross-merchandised fresh peanuts, caramel apple dips and apple crisp.

The store also offered consumers books and pamphlets that provided nutritional information, selection methods and delicious recipe ideas. "Sampling played a big part in the promotion," Hebel adds. "Our staff offered consumers tastings of peanuts, apple cider, applesauce and fresh apples with apple dips. We even held a bobbing for apples contest for the kids."

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Potato sales soar in the fourth quarter. Seth Pemsler, vice president of retail, Idaho Potato Commission (IPC), Eagle, ID, advises offering "a broad range of potatoes. This means Reds, Yukons, Fingerlings and Creamers in addition to Russets. Consumers often want to experiment with new recipes or make a family favorite with a different variety this time of year."

When promoting potatoes the week

before Thanksgiving, he says there is no need to heavily discount because consumers are going to buy potatoes anyway. "For example, discount them by 10 to 15 percent, but not by 50 percent. Also, don't increase bag size and offer more 10- and 20-pounders of Russets. Studies have shown consumers will buy more potatoes, but they do so of different varieties."

"Retailers start stocking sweet potatoes

the first week in November and promote them right up until Thanksgiving," says Sue Johnson-Langdon, executive director, North Carolina Sweet Potato Commission, Smithfield, NC. She recommends creatively cross-merchandising. "Instead of the usual brown sugar and cinnamon, tie in canned fruit, sour cream, cheese sauce and even cranberry sauce."

Retailers who have successfully increased year-to-year cranberry case sales and profits have focused on alternative uses, clearly communicating those ideas in their ads, says Mark Sherburne, general manager of produce, Ocean Spray Cranberries, Inc., Lakeville-Middleboro, MA. "For example, offer recipes that combine cranberries and citrus, include decorating ideas using fresh cranberries, link cranberries with floral ads."

Cranberries are harvested once a year. Harvest typically begins during the last week of September and continues through October. This year's crop is not expected to be the record 7.9 million 100-pound barrels it was last year, but there will be plenty for promotion, Sherburne says.

"Cranberries are one of three fruits native to North America. In fact, food historians tell us cranberries were served at the first Thanksgiving," he adds.

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PHILADELPHIA Stays on Top



— ALSO INSIDE —

RESTAURANT PROFILE

La FamigliaPage 71

RETAIL PROFILE

Santori's Fruit And Vegetables.....Page 73



PHILADELPHIA Stays on Top

Despite setbacks and changes, Philly's market is still going strong.

BY JACQUELINE ROSS LIEBERMAN



Business is wonderful," says Marty Roth, president, Coosemans Philadelphia, Inc., on the Philadelphia Regional Terminal Market. "I cannot complain. You just have to stay on top of everything and diversify."

Carrying a variety of products seems to be key to keeping up with the changing times. "Diversification is everything, because everybody wants to be in everything. Times are changing. People want to come for that one package, instead of shopping around. They want to get their tofu with their garlic," says Roth.

"That's where the business is headed. A lot of people want to do one-stop shopping," agrees Anthony Stea, CEO, Stea Bros., Inc., on the terminal market.

"If you want to continue to grow, you expand your product line. You get more customers that way," says John DiFelicantonio, partner, Ryeco Inc., on the terminal market.

There are other reasons purveyors expand their offerings, as well. "People switch companies," notes Jack Collotti, vice president, Collotti & Sons, Inc., on the terminal market. "Maybe they were buying strawberries from you. Now they're buying grapes."

"There are times when with one item, prices are so high and sales are so low. If you depend on one item, you're going to have

peaks and valleys in your business," notes Joe Procacci, CEO, Procacci Bros. Sales Corp., Philadelphia, PA. "When we started, there were several winters when we had freezes in Florida and didn't have any tomatoes. If we didn't diversify, we wouldn't make any profit in times like that."

As some businesses grow, others disappear altogether. There are fewer brokers than there were several years ago, Stea says, adding, "One broker has 20 different stores it's buying for." And, he notes, "More of these guys down here go direct. There are more FOB brokers than there are street brokers."

Chains are buying less from wholesalers. "They're getting their stuff direct now. It's not the way it was 10, 15 years ago," notes Gary Klinghoffer, president, GK Produce, Inc., on the terminal market.

Recently, the U.S. military went from buying produce on the terminal market to buying direct for its local commissaries — a loss merchants will have to make up for with other customers. Still, the outlook for wholesalers on the market is good.

"Business is good. Especially in the spring and summer," states Jimmy Storey, president of the Philadelphia Regional Terminal Market and president, Quaker City Produce Co., on the terminal market. "More people are aware that fresh fruits and vegetables are good for you. It's all over the news, and that's definitely helping out."

"We've got to be more competitive. Gear it

to the smaller buyer — that's where we concentrate our business. I'm looking to take care of the smaller customers," says Klinghoffer.

"Wholesalers are very important, because a lot of small vendors come to the market. It's the only place they can go and get fresh produce," says Procacci. "In the food business, small retailers, small restaurateurs need to have a place like this to get fresh produce daily."

"Some people can't afford to buy direct — they're not big enough," agrees DiFelicantonio.

Buyers are not the only concern. "Sometimes when the freight gets high, the drivers control the market," says John Durante, president, Nardella, Inc., on the terminal market. He notes many truck drivers do not opt to pick up half a load when gas prices are high.

"Gas prices, utility prices, labor prices — everything costs more," notes DiFelicantonio.

"It's got its ups and downs," says John Black, sales, E.W. Kean Co, Inc., on the terminal market. "Especially with the freight cost. That's a big factor this year. Some of it is truck companies closing down, but it's more the high fuel prices." By necessity, he says, much of this cost will be passed on to customers. "We have to. It's got to get passed on."

"Freight is probably the biggest problem in this industry," agrees Chip Wiechec, president, Hunter Bros., Inc., on the terminal market.

Shipping by rail may be a solution for some, but not for Black, who says trains simply do not run fast enough for his business. "Rail is more or less for onions and potatoes — stuff like that. You can save a little bit of money on rail. But I'm bringing lettuce and cantaloupes and stuff like that, and you've got to bring it in fast," he explains.

The weather plays another important role. "This whole business revolves around weather conditions," notes Stea. For example, "The Jersey blueberry crop's cut down in half this year."

"The more the business changes, the more it stays the same," says Durante. "It's got its ups and downs."

WHAT'S HOT IN PHILADELPHIA?

New items are constantly coming into vogue in this diverse, bustling city. Roth reports

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Reader Service # 13

live hydroponic lettuces, with their roots intact, are the big new item at Coosemans. The company recently began offering specialty micro-greens, such as daikon, and spicy-hot Sechuan buttons from Lake Success, NY-based Koppert Cress USA, that upscale restaurants use as a garnish as well as an ingredient. "They'll do fine because it's just a beautiful package. They sell a lot of them in Europe. It's a little more expensive because of the packaging, and people are price-conscious, but they will catch on," says Roth.

"The herb category continues to grow. We're looking to continue adding to our offering of herbs," says John Vena, president, John Vena, Inc., on the terminal market. "Good produce is a great way for a restaurant or retailer to distinguish itself. Fresh herbs are an area where the restaurants that want to be the best of the best can get ahead."

Of the herbs that sell well, Vena says, "In this area, basil is king. It sells better than the others by far. The second mover is maybe mint. Parsley is always a big deal." Other herbs that do well are rosemary, thyme and tarragon. "Tarragon has picked up because of our Russian and Asian customers."

This summer, "Watermelons are a very good item. We move the big watermelons — we don't have room for the little ones," says Roth.

"Most people want the seedless," reports John W. Waleski, president, John W. Waleski Produce, Inc., on the terminal market. "They don't want the mess. The seedless watermelons, in the last two years, have gotten to be really good. They've gotten to be better on a regular basis, and they're sweeter. Growers have learned which varieties work in which



John Richardson and Kevin McNicholas of Quaker City



Gary Klinghoffer and Fred Klinghoffer of GK Produce



Tom Allen, Vladymir Cvikulo, Daniel Vena and John Vena of John Vena Produce



Tracie Levin, Margie Levin Fischman, Brenda Segal and Sarah Levin of M. Levin & Co., Inc.

areas and they're getting better at picking them."

But while Anglo and Asian consumers increasingly prefer seedless, "Hispanic people like the seeded melons because that's what they grew up on," says Roth.

Nardella sells a fair amount of specialty fruit, such as doughnut peaches and UFO nectarines. "I think they have eye appeal in the store," says Durante. "The retailers we deal with have real traditional items. When these specialty items become more popular and the prices drop, you'll see more of them."

Packaged items continue to increase in popularity. "Americans are very lazy. Especially in big cities," says Roth. "People work two jobs. They don't have time for anything. The produce department is becoming all packages and pre-cut produce." But, he notes, "When you deal with customers with ethnic backgrounds from other countries, they prepare everything from scratch. The Mexicans, for example, do not accept guacamole in a can. They make their own guacamole. Of course, the moment their kids are Americanized and go out on their own, that's a different story."

The demographic makeup of Philadelphia is extremely diverse. Each store may sell to one or a few different types of customers. Alex Dvor, owner, A&N House of Produce, located in the Germantown section of Philadelphia, says his independent retail shop services an area that is about 85 percent African-American. "It's a very conservative area. They know what they want," he says, which means his customers are less likely to try a new or exotic item. "String beans and collard greens are crucial. And, of course, good quality fruit."

PRODUCE FROM HERE, THERE AND EVERYWHERE

While much of what sells in Philadelphia comes from Canada and California, local growers get in on the action from spring until fall, and local storage items such as potatoes, onions and apples are sold year-round.

"A lot of the retailers like the local stuff," says Anthony Stea, CEO, Stea Bros., Inc., on the Philadelphia Regional Terminal Market. "New Jersey has the best tomatoes in the world."

New York state cauliflower is also sought after. "They do a good job with that because they have that kind of weather," says John Vena, president, John Vena, Inc., on the terminal market.

"Once you get into Jersey's sea-

son, on the mixed vegetable side we will have pretty much all New Jersey produce," says Gary Goldblatt, president, G&G Produce, Inc., on the terminal market. "On the tomato side, it's going to be 50 percent Jersey, 50 percent out of state."

"In the summertime, we do a lot of local produce," agrees Michael Lombardo, sales, Pinto Brothers, Inc., on the terminal market. "Weather is a big part of it. Last year we had local New Jersey peppers into November."

"When you're handling the local stuff, the freight is much better," he adds. "It's nothing next to what you pay for California produce."

"When you get into the local stuff, you can buy cantaloupes for \$1 apiece instead of \$2 apiece," says

Chip Wiehec, president, Hunter Bros., Inc., on the terminal market.

Supermarkets and produce shops are not the only ones looking to buy local food. "Farm stands that open up this time of year all want to sell local stuff. They purchase some Jersey produce to complement what they have," reports Goldblatt.

While local produce is popular during the warmer months, imports get hot during the winter. "We get produce from everywhere — Mexico, Chile, Spain," notes Wiehec.

"We have no more seasons," notes Mike Maxwell, president, Proccacci Bros. Sales Corp., Philadelphia, PA. "People's expectations of what a retailer provides them with have changed. Fifty years ago, stores

didn't have to be huge because they didn't have a lot in the winter. You go back to the '70s, there were no grapes past Christmas."

During spring, when America's fall fruit is less than stellar, "We import pears and apples from Argentina," says John DiFeliciano, partner, Ryeco Inc., on the terminal market. "It's a fresh product — it's not coming out of storage. They're nice and crispy."

"We're going to follow the sun," says Maxwell. "It's a small world, with transportation becoming available. As more and more exporters get into the United States, there's more and more demand for the products. It's become a global produce world."

pb

PHILADELPHIA REGIONAL MARKET PROFILE

Okra, which always sold well for use in classic soul food dishes, now sells well to immigrant communities. "When Indian customers started to move out of New York to here, our okra business came back," says Vena of John Vena.

"My main items are mushrooms, potatoes, onions and the California lettuces. In the past six years, we started doing exotic stuff like Mexican and California avocados, cilantro and basil," says Kean's Black.

New influxes of immigrants constantly change the demand for ethnic produce. Nardella's Durante has seen an increase in Latino, South African and West African residents in the Philadelphia area.

"It's becoming more of an ethnic kind of thing. You have Asian people, Indian people, Hispanic people, South Africans, Koreans. They're a big part of our business here," says Al Finer, president, Al Finer Co., on the terminal market. "The people who have the larger retail supermarkets cater to a lot of ethnic groups because we are in a multicultural world today."

"Specialties have become more mainstream," agrees Roth of Coosemans. "You go to any store or restaurant, they're using what was once a specialty. They're not even called a specialty anymore."

For example, he says, "Fifteen years ago,



Anthony Stea
of Stea Brothers



Mark Levin
of M. Levin & Co., Inc.



Nelson Gonzales of
Coosemans Philadelphia



Marty Roth of
Coosemans Philadelphia



Alex Dvor of ADM Produce
(buyer on the market)



Tom Kovacevich of
Kovacevich Co. Phila., Inc.

spring mix mesclun was a specialty. Very few restaurants used it."

The demand for arugula has jumped, as well. "It's been a siege with arugula," says Vena. "It wasn't discovered all of a sudden. Chefs with an Italian background were using it, and it had a trickle-down effect. The bagged salad business has helped move it along, as well."

Basil, too, has gained popularity. "Twenty years ago, it was either imported from Israel or Hawaii. Now, it's grown in Florida and all over the world," notes Roth. In the past few years, he says, microgreens and heirloom tomatoes have become popular.

Greater varieties of each item are also becoming popular. "What we're seeing now is an even broader selection in the tomato category," notes Vena of John Vena.

"People get passionate about the taste of tomatoes," says Procacci of Procacci Bros., which helped spur the growth of the tomato category in recent years. "Our goal was to find a tasty tomato. We developed the UglyRipe, then introduced the grape tomato the same year. We're always working on new varieties."

Consumers are more willing to try those new varieties, as well as specialty items, than ever before. "Most good cooks are using everything now," adds Kalman Batt, vice president, Al Finer Co. "People are much more familiar

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Reader Service #93

with all different kinds of Mexican fruits and vegetables, for example."

"I think a lot of it has to do with the cooking shows," says Coosemans' Roth. "From Julia Child to today. It came around slowly. First, housewives found out about shallots." Now more people are using cilantro. "I would say, in the last 10 or 15 years, it became popular."

The growth in ethnic restaurants also has an effect on consumer buying habits. "If you go to a Mexican restaurant, you get cilantro all over the place," notes Mike Maxwell, president, Procacci Bros. Sales Corp.

Vena of Jon Vena adds more privately owned Hispanic restaurants have been arriving in the Philadelphia area. "About five years ago, our avocado shippers said, 'I'd like to sell you some No. 2 fruit. You can sell it to the tacorias.' I said, 'What's a tacoria?' About two months later, I called him back and said, 'I just saw my first tacoria.' Now there's a lot," he explains.

In addition to cilantro, Nardella's Durante reports a rise in demand for limes. "It seems to me Latinos use limes the way Americans use tomatoes. They use them in everything. Within the last 10 years, I'd say we move 30, 35 per-



John Durante of Nardella, Inc. and Andre Santori of Santori's Fruits and Vegetables (buyer on the market)



Bill Dwyer and John Burch of Kovacevich Co. Phila., Inc.



John Waleski and Karen Walseki of John W. Waleski Produce, Inc.

cent more limes than we used to. More people on the market are handling that item, so the increase might actually be 90 percent more."

Bananas, too, are selling well because they are popular in Hispanic cooking, according to Mark Levin, owner, M. Levin & Co., Inc., on the terminal market. His company has carried a full line of tropical produce for 75 of its 101-year history. Included in bananas he now carries are plantains, niños and manzanos.

Other items are seeing a boom, as well. "We sell a lot more hot peppers than we used to," says Gary Goldblatt, president, G&G Produce, Inc., on the terminal market. "In the winter we bring in a lot of gray squash for the Spanish trade."

Nardella recently acquired rambutans, a fruit similar to lychee. "Dole was starting to get big into that, and I'm in the process of finding out which ethnic groups eat them, how they eat them, how they use them, so I can give my customers that information," says Durante.

"There's more interest in tropical and subtropical fruits like lychees and rambutans. Mangos continue to grow every year, and obviously avocados continue to grow. We sell coconuts to Indian people, Southeast Asian people and some Hispanic people," adds Vena.

While most Anglo customers buy with their eyes, Nardella's Durante notes Latino customers are more likely to buy according to

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quality and less according to appearance. "They're more in tune to buying according to taste. They're educated consumers," he notes.

Packaging has also become more important. "We pack a lot of products just for scanability," says Procacci's Maxwell. "A lot of times cashiers have to identify an item. With so many items, they almost have to be an expert." Unless, of course, each item can be scanned. "It also brings traceability and is a tool for reducing shrink at the store level."

Maxwell also reports a rise in private-label produce. "In our organic line, we're doing a lot more private labeling. Our conventional line is pretty stable. Stores can control their standards a lot better with private labeling."

A NEW KIND OF CUSTOMER

As the demographic makeup of consumers continues to change, so do the demographics of buyers. "Business has been very, very good, I think, because some of these ethnic people who are coming to this market," notes Storey of Quaker City Produce Co.

In the past several years, many new buyers on the market are immigrants from Africa looking to achieve the American dream through the produce business. "They go into a lot of these neighborhoods where chains stores won't go in. It's a wonderful service," says Durante.



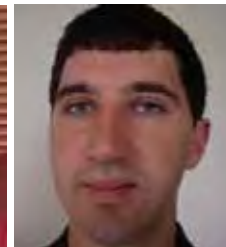
Todd Penza, Pete Penza, Michael Lombardo, Buddy Lombardo, Fred Penza and Louis Penza of Pinto Brothers



Steven Wiechec
of Hunter Bros.



Jack Collotti Jr.
of Collotti & Sons, Inc.



Brian Collotti
of Collotti & Sons, Inc.

"We have more of these big Korean companies," notes Collotti of Collotti & Sons. "They're getting bigger and bigger."

"You're starting to see a lot of Indian supermarkets, as well," notes G&G's Goldblatt.

At one time, chain supermarkets bought produce at the terminal market. Today, most of

their supply comes direct. "The large majority of our customers are independent retailers," Durante explains, although chains will often call for fill-ins, and brokers and restaurants may buy

some produce from him.

"Instead of the large chains, which are strictly price conscience, we basically concentrate on 2-, 3- or 4-store family-owned chains that really care what they put on their counters," says Finer's Batt.

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ORGANICS ARE STILL THE FUTURE

Most businesses on the Philadelphia Regional Terminal Market agree organics have a promising future. But, for now, they do not move well. "The demand for organics on the terminal market is low," notes Todd Penza, sales, Pinto Brothers, Inc., on the market. "We sell organic as we can, as the market allows it."

"It's the way of the future," says Mark Levin, owner, Levin & Co., "I believe in the organic program. But it's just not taking on any volume. I've got organic grapes right now that are as sweet as sugar, but nobody wants them."

"Part of the reason organics aren't selling around here is organics are so much more expensive. Our customers are trying to beat the supermarket prices," says Penza. Plus, he adds, "The shelf life is less."

"There's no market for it. It's all ugly looking. People want pretty looking fruit. As long as it's pretty looking, they'll buy it," says Anthony Stea, CEO, Stea Bros. "I just think organic is not what everybody says it is. They're not coming here for it, that's for sure. Once in a great while someone asks for organic spring mix."

"People say they want organic, but when they see it sitting on the shelf, it isn't as pretty and they're not sure they want to buy it," agrees Levin. Of course, this is not true for every organic item, he notes. "Some items look good no matter what, like apples."

John Vena, president, John Vena Inc., notes the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) new organic standards make it more difficult and expensive to handle organic produce,

as it must be kept separate from conventional to avoid chemical contamination. Becoming certified organic also means hiring a third-party auditor. "It requires a big investment," he notes.

"I think it's going to keep growing the way they say it is. I see more organic in the retail stores than I did growing up," says Penza. "If customers begin to demand it, we'll have to bring in more organic."

"We'll all have to get into it sooner or later," adds Gary Goldblatt, president, G&G Produce, Inc., "when more and more shippers get into it and it becomes a full-fledged item."

Many organic items are already close in price to their conventional counterparts, Chip Wiechec, president, Hunter Bros., Inc. points out. "A lot of times, it may be only a matter of a couple of dollars. As they

come closer, more people are going to buy them," he says.

According to Levin, much of the cost is in transitioning the land from conventional growing to organic. "Sooner or later, that cost will even out. Once the soil is changed over, then the expensive part is done."

Outside of the terminal market, sales of organics are faring better. "The top-growing lines we have are organics and ethnic specialties," says Mike Maxwell, president, Procacci Bros. Sales Corp., Inc., in Philadelphia but not on the terminal market. Procacci was the first company to grow organic tomatoes in Florida

"Our organics business is growing every year," agrees Joe Procacci, CEO. "It depends on the clientele you have. The chains have clientele in affluent areas where more people want organics."

pb


notes. "It keeps them tuned into new products. They're always looking for something new."

"We have a lot of people walking the market. More Columbians and Mexicans," reports

Kean's Black. "Most of our customers walk the market. Twenty-five percent of our business is over the phone, 75 percent walk the market. Although that 25 percent are big customers."


Stea of Stea Bros. agrees many customers are opting to order sight-unseen. "It's more and more by the phone," he says.

"There's more of that now than there was



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PHILADELPHIA REGIONAL MARKET PROFILE

10 years ago," agrees Hunter's Wiechec. "We have people who trust me if I say it's good, who will buy it over the phone."

"You have a lot more people doing more on the phone — pre-booked stuff, instead of coming down and buying. They trust us a lot," says Collotti.

However, most customers prefer to shop the old-fashioned way. "Most people shop around. They want to buy the best they can for the best price they can," says Ron Milavsky, president, BRS Produce Company (trading as Frank Leone), on the terminal market.

"Call-in customers have a lot of faith in you, because they're letting you be their eyes. Some people want to see stuff," says G&G's Goldblatt. And while the wholesaler can tell a customer if a product looks good or bad, big or small, there are times when an item may be somewhere in the middle. "If the guy's down here himself, he can make a judgment call."

A&N's Dvor shops on the market six days a week and buys all the produce for his independent store there. "It's always possible to get deals there," he explains. "There is a lot of product diversity. You deal with more than one person. At the market, you can touch, you can smell, you can eat, you can try. You can get your customers the best."

"The people who do take the time to come



Chip Wiechec and Max Wiechec
of Hunter Bros.



Steve Levachenco and
Mickey Crawford of Ryeco

down here are the smartest ones," says Wiechec. For example, "If you're spending your own money, you're going to buy what you consider to be the best box of lettuce for the price."

"Of course, you have certain people you feel more comfortable with and you trust them, but basically you shop around and compare prices and products," notes Dvor.

Some customers have been buying from

the same wholesalers for years. "When we first started, I probably dealt with their parents," says Kean's Black. In some cases, "We grew up together. It's like a great big family."

"When I first came here, I went to everybody. But I kept coming back to the people who treated me well," says Andre Santori, owner, Santori's Produce and Deli Market, Galloway, NJ, who opened his store in 1990. He was on the market shopping at Nardella. "I always stop here [at Nardella], everyday, whether it's for one box or 100 boxes."

"It's my pleasure to shop on the market," proclaims Dvor. "I'm so grateful to have this environment."

Wholesalers on the terminal market sell to customers as close as Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Maryland and Virginia and as far away as Florida.

"There's a big push out of this market to serve the purveyors who serve the casinos," notes Finer of Al Finer, including the celebrity-chef owned restaurants in Atlantic City.

Many customers have a choice between the Philadelphia produce terminal and Hunts Point in the Bronx, NY. "There are a lot of buyers who use both," says Goldblatt of G&G.

"It's a good time for customers. There are a lot more options for them than in the past," notes Ryeco's DiFelicianantonio.

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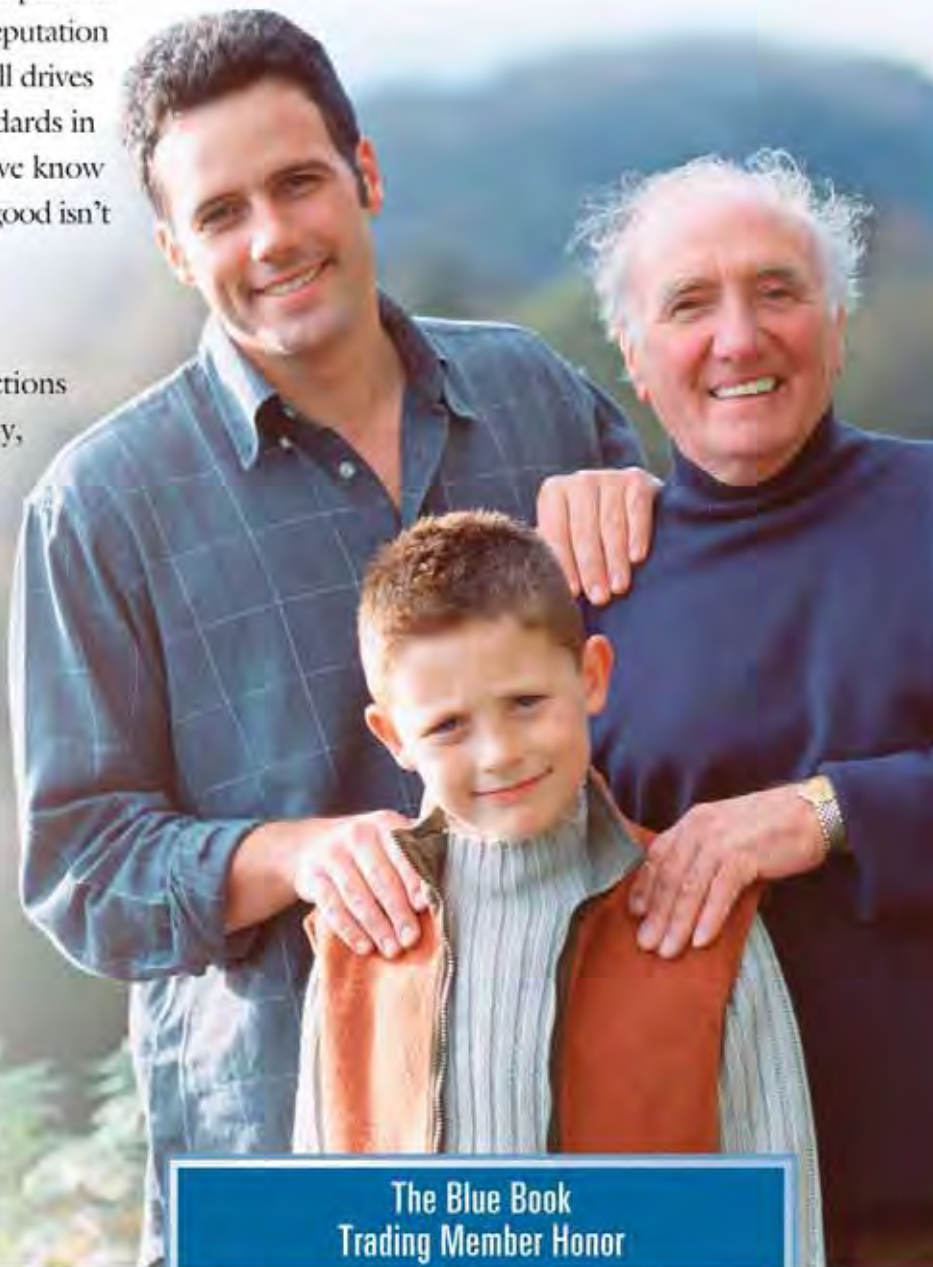
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Reader Service # 5

"Some of your New Yorkers come here. We sell stuff a little bit cheaper than New York here," says Kean's Black.

The Philadelphia market opens earlier on Sundays than the Hunts Point market, Vena of Jon Vena notes.

As competition increases, wholesalers are offering more services. "We offer delivery," says DiFelicianantonio. "We try to help with pricing and make sure we always have product here for them. If we see something new that would benefit them come down the road, we let them know. We work hard to keep our customers satisfied so they can satisfy their customers."

"We have much more service, as far as delivery," notes BRS' Milavsky. "That's a change over the last 10 years."

At Al Finer, employees look at every box in a shipment and separate boxes according to quality. "Our customers rely on the fact that what they see, they get," says Batt.

Shippers also enjoy a good relationship with wholesalers here. "They rely on us to tell them how it arrives," Batt adds.

"Most of the stuff we're selling is from relationships my dad formed with shippers. I talk to one guy — my grandfather did business with his dad," notes Hunter's Wiechec.

"They may have too much stuff. I help them out," says Collotti of Collotti & Sons.



Kallman Batt (standing) and Al Finer (seated) of Al Finer Co.



John Black of E.W. Kean Co. and Ziggy Sidibe (buyer on the market)

"Sometimes I sell it and I don't even make anything. If they're going to help me when stuff's short, I'm going to help them."

"Without shippers giving us the product and trusting us to make the most out of the sale, we would be out of business," according to DiFelicianantonio.

The relationship works both ways. "If I tell my growers we've got something that doesn't look right, they'll go back and have it inspected," says Wiechec.

THE RETAIL ENVIRONMENT

In greater Philadelphia, says Coosemans' Roth, "There are a few independents. But mostly, it's big chains. The independents are going." Even the big chains are getting bigger. "Honestly, I think the way the chain-store business is going, they're buying each other out."

"There are fewer smaller chains," states Wiechec. "They're still strong in the city itself."

"A lot of the bigger chains don't want to be in Philadelphia because it's a union town," notes Roth.

"The city of Philadelphia will always have its little independents that will take care of the Hispanic neighborhood, the black neighborhood or whatever ethnic niche that neighborhood needs," says Roth. "It's always an immigrant who supports the produce business." **pb**

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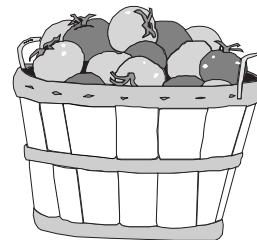


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La Famiglia

Classic technique and first-rate ingredients combine to create a memorable dining experience.

BY JODEAN ROBBINS



Behind the dark wooden door and paned windows of La Famiglia lies a restaurant that provides an intimate and classic eating experience. The old world décor hints at the authenticity of the meal, and the warm greeting of the hostess and staff makes you feel you are a personal friend.

Owned by Giuseppe Sena and his brother Luigi, who is also the chef, this 130-seat restaurant has been a Philadelphia Old City institution for 32 years. The Sena brothers are from Naples, Italy; their father worked as a chef for most of his life, cooking at some of

Italy's finest hotels. Beyond what he learned during his formal training in Italy, Luigi learned important aspects of cooking from his father. "My father taught us the importance of freshness in the ingredients we use," Giuseppe Sena says.

Produce, a critical element of the food at La Famiglia, constitutes about 80 percent of the menu. "All the fruits and vegetables we use are fresh — nothing is canned," he reports. "Produce is essential to us since we do very classic and natural cooking here. We don't believe in fabricating dishes. Our emphasis is to bring out the flavor of the ingredients and thus create a fabulous dish."

Sena believes his food offers diners a truth-

ful experience. "We cook honestly," he explains. "We bring the flavor from the producer to the pan to the dish to your palate, with as little time in between as possible. You're tasting the real flavors in our food."

The light yet flavor-packed food of La Famiglia definitely melds the best together. Sena wants his diners to understand simpler food tastes better. "Our food is delicate in flavor and ultimately it leads to a more powerful dining experience," he says.

La Famiglia changes the printed menu once a year but has many innovative menu additions throughout the year. "We always feature a new pasta and appetizer every day and all our desserts change on a daily basis," he explains. "Some of the items from our verbal menu eventually make it onto our print menu if they are popular enough. Every two years, we substantially overhaul the overall menu."

The restaurant also offers seasonal and special event menus. "We have a wine-pairing dinner at various times throughout the year and we also do the Seven-Fish dinner at Christmas," describes Sena. "Another fun thing for us as well as our customers is our regional dinners. Every two to three months we choose a region from Italy and offer a dinner based on its specific cuisine. Sometimes we invite a guest chef from the region to cook with us. Our staff really gets excited and has fun with these dinners."

The restaurant boasts a world-class wine cellars underneath the restaurant. One of the largest and most decorated wine cellars in the country, it has selections ranging from a 1947 Barolo to the maturing prize wines of tomorrow. Known primarily for outstanding selections from the famous wine producing regions of Italy, it also boasts an incredible selection of wines from around the world.

HONEST CUISINE

The honesty of La Famiglia's cooking, which comes through loud and clear in everything from the appetizers to desserts, begins with a savory dipping sauce of oil and marinated red peppers with bread. Each aspect of the offering is delivered perfectly to the table with a light, fresh presentation.

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PHILADELPHIA RESTAURANT PROFILE

The appetizers present a cornucopia of produce, including Gamberetti e Funghi, baby shrimp with porcini mushrooms and arugula plus Primizie di Stagione, a spring mix with shrimp, avocado, julienne tomatoes, diced artichoke and shiitake mushrooms in a lemon and olive oil dressing. Manzo Crudo, minced beef cured with lemon and oil and served with capers, scallions, black truffles and Parmigiano cheese on a bed of arugula, bursts with the fresh flavors of each ingredient. The Insalata di Indivia e Rucola mixes arugula and endive with toasted walnuts, Parmigiano cheese and sliced pears in a white balsamic vinaigrette.

The pastas were all expertly prepared in delicate yet flavorful sauces. Pappardelle is prepared with fresh porcini mushrooms in a light tomato sauce; rigatoni is combined with baby shrimp, zucchini, shallots, cherry tomatoes and Pecorino cheese; penne is prepared with prosciutto, fresh onions and Parmigiano; and tagliolini come delectably with ground beef and black truffle in a brandy cream sauce.

Diners will be pleasantly surprised after having eaten the Antipasti and Pasta to have plenty of room left for the Secondi and dessert, thanks to the delicate and light nature of La Famiglia's cooking. Scallopine con Carciofi showcases gently braised veal medallions with artichokes, sun-dried tomatoes and fresh oregano in a white wine garlic sauce. Filetto di Manzo is a grilled filet mignon in a red wine/raspberry reduction sauce. Capesante all'Arancio presents pan-seared sea scallops in a citric orange sauce on a bed of sautéed spinach.

Gamberi al Timo brings perfect jumbo shrimp served with garlic, lemon and thyme and finished in an extra virgin olive oil wine sauce. Even the chicken entrées, often an afterthought in many restaurants, are enticing. Supreme di Pollo ai Porcini is a breast of chicken sautéed with porcini mushrooms, garlic and a touch of tomato, and Fagottino di Pollo serves up a breast of chicken filled with Caprino goat cheese and spinach finished in a rosemary wine sauce.

The dessert cart stages a bounty of fresh fruits expertly combined with traditional dessert flavors. A fresh pear poached in moscato wine sauce is a tempting end to the meal. The chocolate and apricot cake hides tender juicy bits of fresh apricot in the decadent dark chocolate. The visually stimulating coconut and raspberry cake is a mountain of delicious, airy flavor. The almond lemon tart with bits of fresh lemon zest and the fresh fruit cup both taste of fruit picked ripe from the tree.

LOOKING FOR THE BEST

Sena spends from \$4,000 to \$5,000 per month on produce. He sources about 90 per-

cent from Four Seasons Produce, based in Ephrata, PA, but shops the Philadelphia market once a week primarily for tomatoes. Additionally, he buys organic and regional produce from local growers.

The quality of the produce is his first priority when sourcing. "We look for first quality only," he says. "We want the freshest products and take delivery daily. We don't want to store the produce we use."

"Our sourcing is fairly simple and straightforward," he adds. "We use the best and only the best. The success of our dishes depends greatly on the quality of the ingredients we start with, so we take sourcing very seriously."

Sena demands those working with him love what they do, something evident in the attitudes of everyone in the restaurant. The waiters are friendly and attentive but not intrusive, and really show they enjoy what they are doing. Part of the pleasurable dining experience is due to the perfect service of the wait staff. "You have to be honest with yourself and with the customer and love what you do," proclaims Sena. "Then you need to pass it along to your staff."

Most of La Famiglia's weekend customers are regulars, drawn from a 30- to 40-mile radius of the city. During the week, local and out-of-town business people frequent the restaurant. To Sena, his customers are not just clients; they are friends who make his business successful. "I thank all my wonderful customers and friends who have supported me and my family. I hope I can be here and still serve them for many more years."

La Famiglia was Sena's first restaurant in Philadelphia and from it grew two others, Le Castagne, which he owns, and Ristorante Panorama, which brother Luigi owns. **pb**

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Santori's Fruits And Vegetables

Hands-on ownership assures top quality produce.

BY JODEAN ROBBINS



Santori's Fruit and Vegetable offers a refreshing shopping experience for those looking for high-quality produce at reasonable prices. Andre Santori owns four small produce and deli stores in New Jersey including this one at Somers Point.

Santori started his first store 17 years ago in Atlantic City. He took the advice of his father-in-law to focus on produce even though he had no experience in the business. He learned quickly and hung in through the tough startup, eventually turning the store into a successful, profitable business. "When I started I envisioned having several stores but it's taken some time with a lot of hard work and stress," he states. "There were times when I thought I'd throw in the towel but I stuck with it. The help of my family members has been crucial."

Although Santori's square footage may not be extensive, the stores move an incredible volume of produce, close to eight trailers a week. Each store offers the highest quality produce, mostly in 2-pound bags, to customers at rock bottom prices. "We work on moving volume by offering a good price," he reports. "We sell cheaper than the chain stores but offer great quality at the same time."

Produce contributes about 75 percent to

overall store sales. "It's what brings people in," he says. "It is so important, I am focused only on the produce. I dedicate 100 percent of my time to produce. I have someone else who handles the deli operations so I can focus on the produce items."

The small 8,100-square-foot store is organized with an open farmers market feel. Its clean, fresh presentation and wide aisles allow several customers access to the same display at the same time. "I waste more floor space in my stores because I like the openness," Santori comments. There are about 3,500 square feet of retail produce space and 400 square feet of deli.

The layout of the store pretty much stays the same all year long. "We will change positions of some products depending on the season," states Santori, "but we keep most things in the same place and the same format."

The store carries about 150 different items on a regular basis with some increase in the summer, depending on what is in season. At times, Santori offers different sizes of the same products. "I'll carry three different sizes of oranges or grapefruits to give our consumers a better choice and also help them understand the price versus size difference," he explains.

A small value-added section includes spring mix, fruit salad and arugula. The products are made each morning and gone by day's end.

Most of the produce is displayed on large, wooden, movable tables with handwritten or blackboard signs that contribute to the farmers-market effect. Each product is clearly labeled for price. There are about 48 feet of wet rack, and the stores also merchandise in shipping cartons at times.

Each store has at least two employees who are seasoned industry veterans and who have been with the store since it opened. These veterans train the newer employees.

SOURCING FOR SUCCESS

Santori's success is based in large part on getting the quality he needs at the price he needs. "Our customers are looking first and foremost for quality and then service and price," he says. "My success came from being on top of the business and making sure the quality was there. My ability to buy exactly what I need in terms of quality, maturity and volume is what makes or breaks my business."

He sources 98 percent of product from the Philadelphia Regional Terminal Market and the rest from local growers. His procurement of eight trailer loads a week from the market results in over \$4 to \$5 million a year in produce purchases.

He believes relationships are the biggest benefit of the market. "The trust and relationships I've built over the years are valuable," says Santori. "The guys on the market know me and know what I need. They know what I buy and what I don't. They know what volume I can take and what I can pay for it. They know if they give me something lower than my standards, I bring it right back, so they'll tell me right off if what they have fits what I'm looking for or not."

Santori visits the market three to four a week, going from one place to another to find the right mix of quality and price. "I enjoy going up to the market and talking with everyone there," he says. "It is a unique place and one full of information and opportunity."

The stores work on a very close inventory. "I buy only what I need," he adds. "I buy about two days of product. I work close on what I



John Santori, vice president and
Andre Santori, owner

buy. I don't like to carry over much product."

SERVING CUSTOMERS

Service is an important part of Santori's successful formula. "Although a lot of our stuff is bagged in 2-pound bags, we also have singles of some stuff. I never force people to buy more than they want to, so if a customer asks us for a lower quantity than what we have out, we'll pull some and put together the quantity they want."

"All our stores are different," he explains. "Our Atlantic City store is the most diverse with a wide variety of ethnic customers and we carry a more diverse mix of products there. Our Vineland store tends to move more traditional Italian products, like broccoli rabe."

Santori is looking to add organic product in the coming year and reports seeing increasing interest in specialty and tropical produce. "We see this due both to the increase in the

immigrant communities and a growing interest in these items by Americans born here."

Promotion varies among the stores. "In some of the stores we advertise in the local paper," Santori says. "In one location, we advertise weekly in the local paper. In others we do it sporadically throughout the year. But our best advertising is word of mouth."

The company recently hosted a kindergarten class to help educate kids about produce. "About 20 kids came in to see the store and learn about produce," he notes. "We let them walk around the front of the store and see the products, then we took them in the back where I had made a wholesale display in shipping containers much like what you see on the terminal market. We talked to them about where produce comes from, nutrition, and introduced them to some new things like blood oranges, lychees and others. We gave them each a bag of stuff to take home."

Most of the produce moves based solely on Santori's reputation but there are times when he needs to provide a little extra incentive by sampling. "Once we bought a load of cantaloupe that was deliciously sweet but had a green color to it," says Santori. "Customers were bypassing the display so we cut some open and started sampling — then they flew off the shelves."

pb

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Michigan Apples — The Future Is Bright

Climate and development cited as reasons for ripe trend

BY MEREDITH AUERBACH

Life is looking pretty sweet in Michigan's apple orchards. Fall 2007 is bringing an excellent crop — just a bit smaller than last year but with a high level of quality.

Consumer trends also line up to favor Michigan apples. Attention is focused on hot-button consumer issues, such as eating locally, supporting family farms and reducing food miles.

Michigan has close, easy access to the dense populations of markets in the Midwest, Mid-Atlantic and South. And, Michigan apple growers and shippers offer traditional as well as trendier varieties with flavor profiles preferred east of the Mississippi.

"Approximately a thousand family-run farms bring in Michigan's 18-variety apple crop," says Denise Yokey, executive director of the Michigan Apple Committee, the research and promotion arm of the industry, which is based in Lansing, MI. "This year, we anticipate about 20 million bushels of which between seven and eight million go to the fresh market." Available from late August into June, Michigan apples can be shipped virtually year-round.

Yokey credits the northern climate and the development of

orchards along the high-elevation Fruit Ridge for the distinctive flavor profile that combines high acids and good sugar levels. "We produce some of the older Eastern varieties — McIntosh, Empire, Northern Spy — that other producing areas don't. Some are cooking or baking apples but we also have a great line-up of varieties for fresh eating."

"We're very optimistic about this year," relates John Schaefer, president of Sparta, MI-based Jack Brown Produce, a grower-owned corporation that packs, stores, sells and ships for 75 growers. "Because we're so close to these markets, we can quickly adapt to market changes. Our retail customers like how much flexibility we can provide. The battle to convince retailers to display and promote the Michigan crop is behind us. We now compete on the basis of variety, quality, speed to market and service."

FULL VARIETY COMPLEMENT

According to Tom Pletcher, vice president sales and marketing, for BelleHarvest Sales, Inc., Belding, MI, "The Midwest and Mid-Atlantic consumers often prefer Michigan's more unique varieties. They want a hard, crisp apple, with high brix and a tart finish. For many, that means the traditional specialty regional varieties such as McIntosh. As demand increases, we are increasing our crops of newer varieties including Gala, Fuji and, of course, Honeycrisp. These will grow over time, bringing in greater value. Like most apple producers, half of our fresh crop is still Red Delicious, but each year the share is a bit smaller as the other varieties move front and center."

"Apple consumers are more sophisticated than just a few years ago and want a broad assortment of flavors and textures," Yokey adds. "For Michigan, that transfers to some older varieties and many new ones. The Michigan Apple Committee supports retailers in their efforts to effectively sell our apples with demos and sampling, school promotions and recipe ideas. We field two merchandisers to help educate and assist retailers with variety



Photo courtesy of Michigan Apple Committee

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Photo courtesy of Michigan Apple Committee

selection and displays."

According to Jack Brown's Schaefer even specialty varieties such as Ginger Gold and Golden Supreme can be found. "We have some volume available in September."

Mark Anusbigian, co-owner of Westborn Markets, Detroit, MI, says, "It's natural for us to promote Michigan apples. For us, this

"It's natural for us to promote Michigan apples. For us, this fruit is homegrown and fits in well with our practice of supporting local farmers and bringing the freshest product to our customers."

**— Mark Anusbigian
Westborn Markets**

fruit is homegrown and fits in well with our practice of supporting local farmers and bringing the freshest product to our customers. For apples, we create a niche display of 15 to 20 varieties, and we place Michigan, Washington and California together as well as baking apples alongside fresh eating apples. We get lots of traffic — people

looking for a great pie apple, one for salads, traditional varieties and some for snacking, like the Honeycrisp.

"During the harvest time of September to November, we also merchandise 5- and 10-pound double-handled brown paper bags of schoolboy-size Michigan varieties," he adds. "These give us a great ring. Putting everything together to focus on apples in the fall makes our produce department better for customers and more successful for us."

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

The Michigan apple industry is responsive to changes in the marketplace and consumer demands for better quality, more varieties as well as new technology and more streamlined distribution.

"The bulk of our crop goes into controlled atmosphere [CA] storage at harvest," says Barry Winkle, co-owner of Greg Orchards & Produce, Inc., Benton Harbor, MI. "We farm our own acreage and pack, sell and ship for other growers. We use MPC or Smart Fresh to inhibit ethylene binding. Apples stay crisper and fresh even longer, extending our season. We start opening the CA rooms right around Thanksgiving and the selling season runs to June."

Yokey of the Michigan Apple Committee notes more Michigan shippers are using tray packs to improve appearance and display quality.

BelleHarvest's Pletcher points to innovations such as the fresh apple slices served by McDonald's, based in Oak Brook, IL. "Many are Michigan Empires," he says, "selected because they hold up so well and have a good sweet and tart apple flavor."

According to Ed Osowski, director of produce for South Bend-IN-based, Martin's Supermarkets, a 20-store chain of stores in

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northern Indiana and Michigan, "It's become a tradition in our stores to kick off the harvest season with bulk sales of Michigan apples in harvest bins for two to three weeks starting in September and then moving to bagged sales by variety and size. We heavily feature what we call 5-pound Martin Select bags of 80-count variety apples and 3-pound lunchbox size 100- to 125-count bags. Even displayed alongside the Washington crop, we get great sales because our cus-

tomers love the taste of McIntosh, Paula Red and Jonagold."

LESS COMPETITION

In April 2007, growers were apprehensive a freeze would cause damage and shorten the crop. That happened in Missouri but Michigan emerged largely unscathed. Smaller crops from Washington and California also can help improve demand for Michigan product. The primary distribution area is a

triangle that extends from the Grand Rapids southeast to Florida, Virginia and the Carolinas, and southwest to Texas.

Growers and shippers agree that the eating-locally trend now capturing consumer attention is having an impact on their business and the demand for Michigan apples. Jack Brown's Schaefer notes, "Our job is to find the best home for the product with the highest possible value. The fresh market is first and best, followed by process then juice. Having large population centers such as Chicago, Detroit, and Milwaukee just a few hours away makes a difference. Even the Eastern markets such as Baltimore and Indianapolis are just over a day."

BelleHarvest's Pletcher stresses the cost factor of locally grown produce, saying, "Transportation just costs less."

Summing up the prospects for the Michigan apple industry, Yokey of the Michigan Apple Committee says, "The future looks good. The industry is increasing investment, getting more efficient and better able to use the research coming out of Michigan State University just a few miles down the road. Our quality continues to improve with better pack design to provide better appearance. Retailers are noticing and finding Michigan apples well worth their value."

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Eastern Apples — A Unique Variety of Flavors

For consumers looking for locally grown, Eastern apples can be the answer.

BY BOB JOHNSON

Apples may be associated with the state of Washington, but for retailers east of the Mississippi River, there are tremendous opportunities in Eastern apples.

Consumers up and down the East Coast are demanding more locally grown produce, particularly apples.

"Eastern apples are local," says Sandy Cohen, president, Cohen Produce Marketing, Aspers, PA. "Local is the new organic. People would rather buy local. You don't want to support the oil industry by trucking apples in 3,000 miles from Washington."

Part of the market appeal of Eastern apples is they can be brought to market with less use of fossil fuel. "Eastern apples are within 400 to 500 miles of two-thirds of the population of the United States and Canada," says Jim Allen, president, New York Apple Association (NYAA), Fishers, NY. "This area is closest to the market, which means you are using the least amount of fuel to get them to market."

Many areas have effective campaigns urging consumers to buy local produce as a way to sustain a healthy local community. "Buying local is a big issue, people are looking at food miles," says Russell Bartolotta, general manager, Klein's Kill Fruit Farms Germantown, NY. "They want to keep the farmers in their local area going to stop everything from being built up."

The continuing rise in fuel costs has turned shipping distance into a huge advantage for Eastern apple producers, according to Bartolotta. "It costs \$6,000 to \$7,000 to ship a truckload of apples from the Yakima Valley to the eastern United States," Bartolotta says. "We've got a big advantage there."

Many people are looking for local produce because they know where it came from and expect it to be safe. "We've been seeing a real interest in buying local," says Dave Robishow, regional marketing manager for the Virginia Department of Agriculture (VDA), Richmond, VA.

He believes the appeal of local produce brings together a number of issues — food miles, security and food safety.

LOCAL — AND UNIQUE

Most Eastern apple shippers supply varieties you just cannot get anywhere else at any price. "Retailers want to stock variety and we offer 23 varieties through the summer and fall seasons," notes Lee Peters, vice president for sales and marketing, Fowler Farms, Wolcott, NY. "Realistically you could only get nine of these 23 varieties out of the state of Washington."

Virtually all of Fowler's retail customers want to receive all of the 23 varieties as they become available. "What we offer with 23 different varieties is 23 different flavors, and 23 different uses," Peters explains. "We start with Jersey Macs in the second week of August and continue to Fujis in the first week of November."

The uniquely Eastern apple comes in all sizes. "Empire is known as a kid-friendly apple because it is small- to medium-sized, and it fits well in a kid's



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Uses:
Eating, salads, and pies.

Apple Tips:
The best choice for salads.



McINTOSH

Flavor:
Sweet with a tart tang. Very juicy.

Uses:
Eating, sauce, salads, and pies.

Apple Tips:
Add a thickener if making a pie.



EMPIRE

Flavor:
Blends sweet and tart, crisp and juicy.

Uses:
Eating, sauce, and pies.

Apple Tips:
Try a slice on your next burger.



GALA

Flavor:
Mild, sweet flavor and juicy.

Uses:
Eating and salads.

Apple Tips:
Mellow flavor and thin skin make a perfect choice for kids.



CRISPIN

Flavor:
Sweet, refreshing, crisp and juicy.

Uses:
Eating, sauce, and pies.

Apple Tips:
The other green apple. Great for eating and baking.

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Eastern apples appeal to growing consumer demand for locally grown produce.

hand," Peters continues. "The Fortune apple at the other end is a monster."

New York is No. 2 in apple production, according to NYAA's Allen, and produces many varieties unique to the Northeast.

"The key to merchandising Eastern apples is to focus on the wide varieties that are available," says John Russell, director of sales and marketing, Sun Orchard Fruit Company, Burt, NY. "We have up to 16 different varieties of apples."

Macintosh, Cortland and Empire are among the varieties only produced by Eastern growers. "These are very big sellers for us, and they are very big sellers throughout the Northeast," Russell says. "I think it's important to focus on the varieties you can't get from the West."

Others agree the sheer number of unique varieties is the No. 1 selling point. "Variety is, I think, the biggest selling point," says John Iannacci, sales representative, J.P.

Sullivan and Co., Ayer, MA "Our specialty is the Macintosh. It grows well in the Northeast; it grows almost exclusively in the Northeast. The Macintosh is very popular in the Northeast and in Florida, which has a lot of transplanted Northeasterners."

Later in the season, J.P. Sullivan harvests other Northeastern favorites including Cortland, Macoun, Empire and Honeycrisp. "Other regions may also grow these varieties, but we like to think we grow the best ones," Iannacci says.

UNIQUE — AND BETTER

Many Eastern seaboard producers believe deeply their local apples taste not only different but also better. "We have always felt Virginia produces a great tasting apple — we have never stopped pushing that," proclaims VDA's Robishow.

Cohen of Cohen Produce agrees, saying, "The flavor of Eastern apples, in my opinion, is as good or better than Western apples."

Russell suggests people sample a variety of Eastern and Western apples to learn the differences, and adds, "We have a sugar-to-acid profile that gives us a flavorful apple you can't get from the West."

He's not alone: Many grocers believe there is a difference in the sugar-to-acid composition in Eastern apples. "Our apples



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Photos courtesy of New York Apple Association

have excellent flavor and condition," NYAA's Allen relates. "Our apples have an excellent acid-to-sugar ratio that gives them very good flavor."

"We offer a lot of merchandising support and materials to help educate the consumer. We also offer handling materials so retailers can educate their staff on how to handle our apples."

**— Jim Allen
New York Apple
Association**

The Eastern apple harvest begins in August and peaks in September. "We encourage our retailers to put out a full mix not only in the count sizes, but also in the 3-, 5- and 8-pound bags," Sun Orchard's Russell says. "This gives the customers a choice."

One specialty to remember, as fall approaches, is the popular apple tote bag. "We do a good job in the fall leading up to Thanksgiving with the tote apples," J.P. Sullivan Iannacci says. "It's a big item in the fall."

Even in the fall, it is important to offer a variety of packs to suit the needs of customers. "We encourage people to carry all of the packs including tote bags, 3-pound bags, 5-pound bags and loose apples," Fowler's Peters says.

NYAA supplies retailers with point-of-

purchase materials, recipes and variety guides. "We offer a lot of merchandising support and materials to help educate the consumer," Allen notes. "We also offer handling materials so retailers can educate their staff on

how to handle our apples."

Looking ahead, this year is shaping up to be a juicy one for apples. "Retailers will start pricing where they ended last year; and as things fall into place, I don't see a downturn this season," says Bartolotta from Klein's Kill Fruit Farms.

Supplies were low and prices were strong at the end of last season, and this season figures to pick up where last year ended. "There's no carryover from last year's crop, and this will not be a huge year nationwide," Bartolotta says. "There weren't that many apples left in the country as of July 1." **pb**



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Chilean Avocados Provide Year-Round Sourcing

This summer's freeze will not affect the quality of avocado exports to the United States.

BY AMY SHANNON

Despite a freeze in early July, produce experts say Chile's Hass avocado crop will maintain its quality, if not its quantity, for the upcoming harvest.

"Technology and research tells us they will be OK when they get here," says Jim Donovan, vice president of global sourcing for Mission Produce, Inc., Oxnard, CA. "Chilean avocados will continue to flourish."

According to Chris Puentes, president of Inter-Fresh, Inc., a Fullerton, CA-based importer of Chilean avocados, the freeze should not affect the fruit's quality as long as Chilean growers are quick to identify the damaged avocados. "Hopefully, growers in Chile will avoid exporting that fruit," he says.

Maggie Bezart, marketing director for the Chilean Avocado Importers Association (CAIA), Aptos, CA, agrees. "Quality is very important in Chile. They're assuring that the oil content will meet the quality standards consumers expect from Chilean avocados."

Unfortunately, industry experts are seeing a drop in supply compared to last year's exported Hass avocados due to the Antarctic cold wave that struck central Chile.

This season, CAIA estimates 170 to 180 million pounds of Chilean Hass avocados will be exported to the United States. That estimate is down from the 260 million pounds of Chilean Hass avocados exported to the United States last year, notes Xavier Equihua, CEO and executive director of CAIA. "Yes, the freeze wiped out about a third of the supply. But this year's supply is actually more in line with the crops we've had in years prior to the 2006-07 season. We had a very large increase last year," he explains.

"That still leaves a fair amount of Chilean fruit," says Dana Thomas, CAIA board member and president of Index Fresh Produce, a Bloomington, MA-based Hass avocado importer. "Even though it's down, Mexico's supply will fill in any shortfalls."

Equihua agrees. "Keep in mind California also experienced a freeze this year. Every so often, you have freezes. Obviously, it's not what we expected. But, I think this year, we will be in the market with a good amount of fruit."

On a national scale, Chile will export 230 to 240 million pounds of Hass avocados to its international markets between July 2007 and February 2008, estimates Comité De Paltas, Santiago, Chile. Organization experts report Hass avocado crop losses to be between 33 and 37 percent from last year's record-high production figures.

Puentes says early-season Chilean avocados may be a little cheaper than late-season California avocados for a few months due to California avocados being more mature this time of year.

Chile's season primarily runs from about Sept. 1 through Feb. 1, while California avocados are strongest from May to August.

"For the most part, it's very early in the growing season, and there's not a lot of oil content and maturity," Puentes says. "Once you satisfy the demand from consumers who will pay more for California avocados, then Chilean and California avocados will become closer in price. There's only a certain percentage of people that will pay the higher price for the late-season California avocados."

ALTERNATING SEASONS SUPPORT CONSUMPTION

As the California avocado season winds down, retailers replace them with Chilean avocados. The alternating growing seasons has proved to be a major factor in building supply and supporting a growing consumption, Mission's Donovan says. "For the past 22 years, Chilean fruit has really added to the supply."

CAIA's Equihua agrees, noting, "Chilean fruit



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has really helped make avocados a year-round crop."

Since 1990, American consumption of avocados has climbed 7.2 percent each year, according to CAIA's Bezart. This exceeds the average consumption growth rate for other fresh fruits.

"More and more supply has come into the country," relates InterFresh's Puentes. "More retailers are getting involved in ripening programs, prices have decreased and the demand has significantly grown in the past 10 years."

Chile tends to overproduce avocados for

its own use, says Jay Humphreys, president of Ultimate Avocado, McAllen, TX. "The United States is its most important market. It's historically a big market with a lot of volume, particularly during the Thanksgiving, Christmas and Super Bowl seasons." Avocados account for about 30 percent of Chile's gross export sales.

As one of the top suppliers of Hass avocados, Chile allows consumers to enjoy the category year-round, particularly during the fall and winter months, when California avocados are out of season. It was not until recent years that Mexican avocados became

available year-round, Puentes says.

"The emission of Mexican avocados 12 months of the year was the big wild card last year," he notes. "Chile used to be a great complement to California — and it still is. We've used them to help grow demand."

"More than anything, Chilean avocados are a supplement to California and Mexican avocados," Humphreys agrees. "Varied growing seasons help you maintain your relationship with your costumers year-round." He believes the alternating seasons allow his company to offer retailers more choices.

"They fill a gap in our California supply, but there's certainly a home in the market for all of them," notes Puentes.

MARKETING EFFORTS BUILD DEMAND

Jorge Luis Obregon, managing director of the Hass Avocado Board (HAB), Irvine, CA, says regardless of the impact July's freeze will have on the U.S. supply, retailers should feel confident in the year-round promotions available. To keep up that confidence level, he suggests retailers and producers visit HAB's one-stop on-line resource for current avocado market data and up-to-date marketing plans.

Equihua suggests retailers visit CAIA's Web site for more information on the organization's marketing efforts, including seasonal promotions, point-of-sale materials and other selling tactics. Made up of Chilean avocado importers, exporters and producers, CAIA conducts market development activities and promotions to boost the consumption of Chilean avocados in the United States.

Obregon attributes much of the growing demand for avocados to the heavy marketing programs in place.

"Organizations are putting millions of dollars into marketing and these are things that are really driving the growth," says Mission's Donovan.

Promoting the consumption of Chilean avocados served as the main objective of last year's CAIA marketing campaign that included TV commercials, in-store demonstrations, sampling (including club stores for the first time) and promotional events in targeted cities, many of which have a large Hispanic/Latino population. The intense promotional efforts paid off and added to the demand for the fruit, according to Bezart.

This season, CAIA has teamed up with the American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO), based in Hawthorne, CA, to encourage mothers and children to eat more Chilean avocados. "We're getting a lot of positive feedback on this already," Equihua notes. "What better way to reach this part of the market?"

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What's Next?

Looking ahead, Dana Thomas, president of Index Fresh Produce, a Bloomington, MA-based Hass avocado importer, predicts the supply of avocados will increase following this year's harvest. "We should see an upward trend in production for the next five years or so once we get past this freeze."

This makes sense given the increase in avocado consumption. In the last 10 years, U.S. consumption of Chilean Hass avocados has more than doubled from about 8 to 10 million per season to 18 to 20 million pounds, he says.

"Chile's production will continue to increase as the growing season continues to lengthen," he explains. "More and more, we see avocados from Chile are becoming interchangeable with California avocados. They complement each other well."

Although consumption of Chilean avo-

cados is on the rise, price has stayed relatively stable, says Jay Humphreys, president of Ultimate Avocado, McAllen, TX.

Jim Donovan, vice president of global sourcing for Mission Produce, Inc., Oxnard, CA, agrees, "Chilean avocados are really a great value right now to retailers and consumers as people are finding new uses for them."

Once considered an exotic fruit, avocados are becoming more mainstream, he adds. "Retailers are saying they're right up in the top five products. They're a good, versatile product. And they taste good."

Maggie Bezart, marketing director for the Chilean Avocado Importers Association (CAIA) Aptos, CA, agrees. "Avocados have become a staple in the produce department. The industry has worked hard to increase sales of avocados on a year-to-year basis."

pb

CAIA recently signed Ingrid Hoffman, the first Latina to host her own cooking show on the Food Network, as its spokesperson. Hoffman, who hosts *Simply Delicioso*, will promote and bring awareness to the use of Chilean avocados.

Index Fresh's Thomas believes awareness and long-term promotions are key to strengthening the market for Chilean avocados. "The great thing about the Chilean industry is it allows importers like myself to go to retailers and commit to long-term programs. That is the way to build demand. Don't rely solely on day-to-day tie-ins."

One way to do this is to advertise Chilean avocados during more untraditional seasons, such as the fall and winter. "Continuing to maintain large displays and utilize marketing programs during these months can help drive sales," Bezart adds.

"Running promotions tied to television ads along with large displays and demonstrations are good ways to promote Chilean avocados," according to Thomas.

Interfresh's Puentes adds that display contests can serve as simple ways to encourage retailers to promote and drum up sales for the Chilean fruit.

Likewise, says Ultimate Avocado's Humphreys, one of the best ways for retailers to boost the demand for avocados is through increased consumer education. "It's a great fruit," he explains. "It offers more potassium than a banana, but most consumers don't know this. There are a lot of

benefits to eating avocados. They're nothing but good for you."

Although most consumers understand the health benefits of eating avocados, some still believe the fruit contains cholesterol, says CAIA's Equihua. "This is a misconception. It's a fruit. It comes from a tree. How can it have any cholesterol?"

In addition to relaying accurate information about the nutritional value avocados offer, Humphreys suggests retailers organize in-store demonstrations to teach consumers how to buy, ripen an avocado and use avocados at home. "Consumers need to know they can do more with avocados than just make guacamole dip," he says.

InterFresh's Puentes agrees, suggesting, "Think beyond Super Bowl parties."

Mission's Donovan also believes ripening programs and other marketing efforts can be a major boost to sales. "The more people you can get to try them, the better," he says. "They're an acquired taste."

Big, attractive displays move more avocados and build demand, advises Thomas. "We see large displays year-round that do nothing but boost consumer demand. This steady, constant flow allows demand to constantly build on itself."

The same concept works in foodservice, he adds. "Twenty years ago, there were a lot of avocados in the summer but virtually none in the winter. Now that avocados are coming in from Chile, restaurants can have avocados on their menu year-round."

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Four Ways To Enliven Leafy Green Sales

Exploring the state of the greens.

BY DUANE CRAIG

Even as leafy greens remain an essential produce item, growth above their per capita consumption numbers of 52 pounds for 2000 and 2003 remains elusive.

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) estimates show leafy greens per capita consumption below 50 pounds for 2006 and 2007. Those in the business see opportunities and reveal some tactics that could get greens growing to higher numbers.

In recent months, greens have been selling well. According to Ashley Rawl, director of sales and marketing, Walter P. Rawl & Sons, Inc., Pelion, SC, the leafy green category is growing a little bit. "We still don't feel like we're losing in the bulk; we're just really gaining. Our value-added numbers are growing some so that's very positive to us."

"Leafy greens sold well this past winter," relates Frank Schuster, president, Val Verde Vegetable Co., McAllen, TX. "We sell several different areas — traditional Southern greens such as collards, turnips and mustard greens; European ethnic greens, such as kohlrabi, root parsley and Swiss chard; and Hispanic greens such as cilantro, although cilantro is

used across the spectrum. Asians use a lot of cilantro. Actually, Asian greens — such as daikon and methi greens — are growing. Methi has an aroma of curry."

"We have not noticed any change in popularity of any leafy item in particular," says Rick Osterhues, director of marketing, Capurro Farms LLC, Moss Landing, CA. "Overall demand for leafy greens like romaine, green leaf, red leaf, butter and spinach seems to be steady and at levels of demand that were seen before any food-safety issues arose."

Marvin Lyons, produce

director Bigg's Supervalu, Inc., chain, in Milford, OH, echoes that assessment. "Head lettuce is basically flat. We're seeing about the same amount go out every week. It was declining when packaged salads first came out but has now leveled off."

Even though spinach was originally down 50 percent after the September 2006 contamination incident and is still off by about 20 percent, Jen Verdelli, director of sales, Verdelli Farms, Inc., Harrisburg, PA, sees some bright spots. "Baby spinach is on a growing trend. With the spinach crisis, it did take a big hit — but it is getting back to normal." She says Verdelli's savoy spinach is 75 percent back.

Dino Allen, director of produce sales, Glory Foods, Columbus, OH, notes other category directions. "The category is changing, first of all, because of the packaging. Consumers see the convenience of it being cut, cleaned, washed and ready to cook. Second, a lot of people are looking at more healthful eating habits, and greens as well as other fresh vegetables, supply a great source of vitamins."

While leafy greens have always suffered from a lack of glamour, television may be jazzing up their image. "I think the cooking shows have helped," says Brad Fritz, director of produce marketing, the Nugget Markets, Inc., based in Woodland, CA. "Before, people didn't know what some of these items were. I've been in the business for 30 years and I had never tried chard before, but now seeing the different recipes and the ways of cooking it, I gave it a whirl and it's actually pretty good. If you know how to cook it properly, it tastes very good."

"Cooking shows are showing people how to experiment with leafy greens and how simple, fresh and inexpensive these products can be to prepare as a healthful, tasty addition to their healthful on-the-go lifestyle," adds Osterhues. He says restaurants also are adding excitement to leafy greens.

"There are a lot more people looking for things like watercress and some of the more upscale types of greens because there are more people cooking and watching these cooking shows," notes Lyons.

Rawl of Walter P. Rawl continues to see the cate-



gory develop with gourmet-type blends like mustard greens, turnip greens, collard and kale. "From a health standpoint, eating dark, leafy, green vegetables is finally beginning to get across nationally as far as the health benefits. It seems to be trendy right now to sauté some greens with vegetables, put

"It seems to be trendy to sauté some greens with vegetables, put greens with pasta or use a bed of greens with fish on the top."

— Ashley Rawl
Walter P. Rawl & Sons, Inc.

greens with pasta or use a bed of greens with fish on the top."

Other developments include a growing interest in organics. "Organic leafy greens are probably the most popular items, as opposed to the conventional blends," says Ande Manos, sales representative, Babé Farms, Santa Maria, CA. "Organic is more positively perceived to be a safer — and a more healthful — product."

1. OFFER CHOICES

Glory's Allen sees convenience and ease of preparation driving the increase in prepared and packaged greens. He believes this encourages people to try items they would not normally try. "You have traditional customers who still like to purchase bulk items, but packaging will sometimes cause consumer interest in items they haven't tried because those items are easier to prepare."

Glory uses shelf talkers to help stores communicate the message that one bag of cleaned vegetables equals three bunches. "You need to compare bulk price — three items of bulk at a certain price are never going to be more than that bag," says Allen. "Some customers have said they've seen the transition in their stores and the consumer prefers the bag. Some retailers say they do just as much in the bulk as they do in the bag, so they keep both and keep the options open for the consumer."

Packaging makes it easier for consumers to identify different varieties, Capurro's Osterhues adds. It also provides information on nutrition, preparation, recipes and home storage tips.

"There has been a jump in new and innovative packaging," says Manos, "includ-

ing signature blends with extra, value-added condiments."

One includes a recently launched line from Capurro called Bouquet Greens. "Our exclusive 'protective bouquet jacket' increases the products' food-safety image and allows for a bonus-sized bunch of fresh, 100 percent useable product that can be stored inside its own packaging, if storage is needed," relates Osterhues.

2. PROPER CARE AND HANDLING

"One of our biggest concerns is stores

merchandising bagged leafy greens near bulk items because the water from the misters clogs up the holes in the bags that allow oxygen transfer," says William Richards, director of quality assurance, Glory Foods. "The product doesn't breathe correctly so it deteriorates more quickly. You have to keep these products between 33° and 40° F — that allows for a nice, fresh, crisp product coming out of the bag every time."

Rawl's Rawl agrees. "This is a huge issue. We definitely don't want any misting on the bags." He suggests redirecting or turning off misters in the area where the bags are. He

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also says misting takes away from the presentation of the packaging because it makes the windows less clear and customers cannot see the product freshness and color.

According to Mitch Ardantz, vice president of sales and marketing, Bonipak Produce Co., Santa Maria, CA, proper rotation, a simple procedure, is really important.

3. DISPLAY TO SELL

Rawl's Rawl recommends displaying in unique ways. "Have some garlic, red pepper and other recipe items close by. Try pairing with extra virgin olive oil, which is being touted as the new way to cook greens. Draw people to the category. Put out bulk and bag displays. Make the display space a bit bigger so it doesn't get lost in the sea of products, or highlight the category with colored items around it. Make sure signs identify the items and that they have the correct prices."

"Marry leafy greens with other products to suggest uses," adds Ardantz. "For example, put them with tomatoes and dressings, and marry exotics with one another in a kind of build-your-own-salad display."

4. DEMOGRAPHICS, HEALTH AND PROMOTIONS

Matching leafy greens offerings to the

Is Spinach Recovering?

Ray Clark, executive director of the Leafy Greens Council, St. Paul, MN, says there is some preliminary evidence spinach sales have been recovering. He cites the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service's numbers showing a 6 percent increase of domestic shipments to market this year over last year through March 2007.

Others have cautiously noted a similar trend at retail. Brad Fritz, director of produce marketing, Nugget Markets, Inc., Woodland, CA, says, "Spinach slowed down a bit because of the scare, but it seems like it's coming back. It started coming back [in March]."

Marvin Lyons, produce director for Bigg's Supervalu, Inc., based in Milford, OH, is also cautious about the return of spinach. "Spinach never really came back. It has improved but it hasn't come back. We sell more Swiss chard, rainbow chard, dandelion greens and those kinds of things than we used to, but I can't say we're seeing significant increases."

Some pre-cut and packaged greens purveyors have made recipe changes.

"Our greens are processed as ready-to-eat and we use all precautionary measures even though most of our buyers are going to cook it," says William Richards, director of quality assurance, Glory Foods, Columbus, OH. "A lot of consumers were introduced to our product as a substitute for spinach, using it raw and putting it in salads. We have seen companies reformulating their mixes using alternative greens. A lot of companies took hits not just on spinach but across the board because a lot of their products had spinach in them."

Today's focus is on regaining consumer confidence and implementing procedures and technologies to guarantee safe food.

"The spinach crises pushed the industry to find new methods to ensure the product going on the shelf is safe," explains Jen Verdelli, director of sales, Verdelli Farms, Inc., Harrisburg, PA. "It's important retailers make

sure that who they purchase from has a certified HACCP plan and is following proper GAPs." Verdelli Farms recently invested in a state-of-the-art system that samples wash water for pathogens. The system tests water as it passes through the wash system and will yield results in 2½ hours. The theory is if the pathogen is on the leaf, evidence of its presence will be in the wash water.

"I think we're going to have to make some adjustments," says Mitch Ardantz, vice president of sales and marketing, Bonipak Produce Company, Santa Maria, CA. "I think we need to build that consumer confidence level back up and work hard to do that."

According to Rick Osterhues, director of marketing, Capurro Farms LLC, Moss Landing, CA, retailers can help ensure the food they receive from California shippers is safe by buying only from those companies that have signed up with the California Leafy Greens Products Handler Marketing Agreement from the California Department of Food and Agriculture, Sacramento, CA.

"The spinach recall didn't have a lasting effect on us," notes Frank Schuster, president, Val Verde Vegetable Co., McAllen, TX. "The problem was packaged spinach out of California. We sell fresh spinach — grown in Texas. Because it's fresh, people wash it themselves. They're more confident in the product. Our spinach is bulk in a box — bunches of spinach wrapped with Twist'ems."

"The demand for leafy greens is maintaining at a steady pace, and the industry will certainly see an increase as we approach our summer salad season," says Ande Manos, sales representative, Babé Farms, Santa Maria, CA. "However, due to recent events, some consumers may still pause when selecting leafy greens, whether they be packaged or bulk. Consumer confidence is still a bit fragile, and I think our industry is doing exceedingly well at developing new food-safety strategies to satisfy the confidence of the consumer." **pb**

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demographics that frequent the store is a win-win. "I can't give away bok choy in one store, while in another I have two rows of bok choy along with baby bok choy," says Supervalu's Lyons. "We try to market to the neighborhood."

"Spring and summer are a great time to promote fresh leafy greens, bagged salads and all the components that make up a great salad," explains Babé's Manos. "Offering these items on ad is an excellent way to entice the consumer to make that healthful

purchase."

"People are looking for healthy options and healthy choices and as long as the retailers stay with them and promote them, I think people will start buying again," says Verdelli Farms' Verdelli. "All the numbers we have show the retailers that started promoting leafy greens right after everything was okayed by the FDA [Food and Drug Administration] got their numbers back. But the retailers that held off on promoting and putting them back on the shelf haven't." **pb**

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The goal of the program is to allow gifted participants from retail and foodservice to engage with their peers from other industry sectors and immerse themselves in a program that goes beyond the produce trade to encourage strategic thinking and a broader perspective on business.

If you would like to be nominated or if you would like to nominate someone else, please visit www.producebusiness.com and complete the short form.

For more information, please contact Ken Whitacre, publisher, at KWhitacre@phoenixmedianet.com or call 561-994-1118, ext 101.

Computer Software

Revolutionizing the way foodservice manages its produce acquisitions.

BY BILL JOHNSON

Software programs are making their way through the foodservice supply chain. Many changes are impacting the way perishable foods move through the distribution system, especially for restaurants and other foodservice operations.

Warehousing, inventory and shipping operations have become more efficient, thanks to a variety of software programs that save time and money. As distributors face increasingly complicated and far-flung logistical issues, software program developers are producing new systems to help order, store and ship fresh produce.

But beyond data collection and inventory control, software vendors are offering produce distributors and suppliers "management systems" that help them make critical management decisions.

Leroy Meyer, director of business development for Dimensional Insight, Inc., Burlington, MA, says a major problem produce distributors face in terms of managing and tracking sales is an inability to view data in an organized format. "They can create it, but they don't have a way to access it," he explains.

Advanced computer software organizes this data so produce distributors can more easily access and manage information.

"If you don't move it, you'll end up dumping it," claims Henri Morris, president of Solid Software Solutions, Houston, TX. "There's no way some of our clients could keep track of critical dates without this technological help." Solid Software offers distributors programs that use inventory lot numbers to verify how long a product has been in the warehouse, a crucial consideration for foodservice operators requiring ripe and ready-to-eat produce.

Don Walborn, vice president sales and technology, Kirkey Products Group, Longwood, FL, describes his niche as being on the supply side, serving people who grow,

pack and sell. "When a product comes into a customer's packing shed, my job is to know where it came from. Our software gives the product an identity from when it crosses the scale at the packing shed until the time it leaves the yard." In the case of a recall such as last year's Taco Bell *E. coli* incident, this type of software is essential in determining how widespread the problem may be.

Software does more than track products. Software programs enable distributors to build loads faster and create more accurate shipping records, eliminating errors. Walborn says the system cuts down on labor and reduces costs. Lower costs throughout the supply chain can lead to greater profit on menu items.

"Because of better information through software," Morris says, "we can almost guarantee 2 or 3 percent increase in growth."

According to Jeff Waters, national account manager, John Deere Agri Services, Lathrop, CA, integrated systems are extremely helpful to all sectors of the industry. For example, a grower who collects a variety of data from multiple packing lines will need to take time to access the data when he wants to answer a question. But "with the integrated system, he can have immediate access to any data in real time in one place," Waters says. Once again, this impacts the food-safety and traceability issues that have become paramount.

"Keeping track of your costs is important," says Mark Van Leeuwen, president, Measure Systems, Inc., Las Vegas, NV. "If you know the true cost, you can take advantage of the market. Knowledge is power. If you know the situation, good or bad, you can do something about it."



Increasingly sophisticated software helps foodservice operators with inventory and quality control and are an essential food-safety link.

Charles Ward, president of WaudWare, a software developer based in Brampton, ON, Canada, believes software solutions can greatly improve operations and profitability throughout the supply chain. This, of course, is significant for the end user.

Early in the supply chain, growers and producers "can take more orders, keep the number of errors down, and keep on top of cash flow." WaudWare offers the Produce Inventory Control System (PICS), solutions software that provides users with a flexible costing system, a line-by-line display of

inventory and profits, and a warehouse transfer system.

TEAMING UP TO IMPROVE EFFICIENCY

Dimensional Insight supplies intelligence software, also known as analysis and reporting tools, to a variety of businesses, including Naturipe Farms LLC, which wanted to find a system to better manage inventory, track sales and supervise promotions. Dimensional Insight's Diver technology was the perfect fit, Meyer says.

Here is how it works: Throughout the day, Diver collects data from a variety of departments including sales, marketing, accounting and inventory. That data is integrated into the system, analyzed and organized into easy-to-access reports. "An executive can come in each morning and access all information gathered from the day before," says Meyer about the software's "dashboard" tool. "It's reporting on the fly."

On the sales end, the sales team can use the software to access graphs, tables and other data about what they have sold, how much they have sold and where they have sold it. This information can provide foodservice distributors and wholesalers servicing foodservice accounts a direct look into what is currently available and what is in

the pipeline.

Randy Fields, chairman of Park City Group, Park City, UT, says technology has become much more sophisticated at the foodservice level in the past several years. And he should know: His wife Debbie is the moving force behind Mrs. Fields Cookies, which operates some 4,200 locations.

More and more distributors, and even individual operators, are turning to software companies like Park City Group to receive management applications and consulting for their foodservice operations..

Park City provides a variety of applications aimed at reducing out-of-stocks, decreasing shrink and boosting sales, Fields says. For example, Fresh Market Manager offers precise item management, forecasting and production planning, computer-aided ordering and on-hand inventory data.

"It's the best way to get the proper levels of inventory, so that you don't have too little or too much, which becomes shrink," Fields says. "If you have the software in place to manage these factors properly, you will improve the quality of your produce which will drive up sales and customer loyalty."

KEEPING FOOD SAFE

High-tech tracking tools can help keep

food safe by preventing the spread of diseases that pose a threat to prized produce. Measure Systems' Van Leeuwen says software programs can work as critical audit and recall tools for tracking labor, yield and productivity in real-time.

For example, if a foodservice distributor or restaurant receives a shipment of produce and some is rotten, Measure's integrated software systems can trace the box back to find out when it was received, how it was handled and who handled it. "This is particularly important during a time when retailers are dealing with food safety issues," he says.

Because produce is "God-grown," Van Leeuwen adds, it is very susceptible to potential diseases. But with a good tracking system, distributors can prevent the spread of diseases if they can quickly determine where the bad produce is coming from. "You can stop it if you know you bought 50 cases of the item on lot XYZ. To have that traceability is paramount."

Charles Shafae, president of dProduce Man, Half Moon Bay, CA, claims knowing the point of harvest is especially important if contaminated food needs to be recalled. His software can track produce from the field where it was picked to the market where it was delivered. Similar to how FedEx tracks packages, the software uses Radio



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Compatibility And Interconnectivity

Food distributors are using a variety of software programs, yet not all systems may be compatible or able to interface. Full interconnectivity is critical for users who need to connect online.

"We do it all the time," says Charles Shafae, president of dProduce Man, Half Moon Bay, CA. "We provide 'open architecture' that is able to be customized for every location." His customers and their customers may already have a presence on the Web, and they need to be connected.

Connie Taft, president and COO, Integrated Knowledge Group Inc., Bakersfield, CA, says, "If you've got an integrated system, you can improve your customer service and manage a wider breath of product. Speed and turnaround are major benefits."

Her company offers ProPack, an integrated accounting software system specifically created with the produce industry's needs in mind. The software allows users to access and analyze data directly from other reporting tools, such as Microsoft Excel. "Everything is updated in real time," she says. "This allows users to quickly and accurately make critical management decisions."

pb

Frequency Identification (RFID) and a microchip containing information such as the product's date, time, product code and agricultural field.

"If there's a recall, such as the big spinach one last summer, and you don't have the proper traceability, you have to notify everyone to find out who touched it," says WaudWare's Waud. "But with the right kind of technology in place, you could call the one specific supplier and trace it back to the farm it came from. This technology could have prevented perfectly good spinach from going to waste."

MEETING CUSTOMER DEMAND

When software developers look at the future demands of their customers, they see many challenges. Shafae anticipates customers expecting systems that can operate even faster. "In the United States, when people want something, they want it right away," he says. "And the new generation of younger managers are more knowledgeable about computers."

In the past, ordering was done over the phone, then by fax and then by e-mail, Shafae notes, adding even e-mail is no longer fast enough for some people. "I'm always thinking about what my customers' customers want," he explains. "They want to put in an order instantaneously on the Web. Everything is going to the Web because the world is getting smaller. What used to be mom-and-pop businesses are now competing against the world, and they constantly need new tools to compete."

Constant R&D is required, agrees Kirkey's Walborn. "The demand for service

is not just to make the current operation more efficient but to look ahead at the customers' needs and help them make management decisions." He wants to be able to predict the customer's future needs before the customer asks for them. "We're not just a supplier; we're a consultant," he says.

Tim York, president, Markon Cooperative, Salinas, CA, says, "Clients rely heavily on us. They ask us for new ways to evaluate data, and we develop some in-house."

LOOKING AHEAD

Software providers see opportunity for development. "The future of the business is phenomenal," says Solid Software's Morris. "It's evolving all the time. We have abilities I wouldn't have dreamed about in past years."

Kirkey's Walborn notes the future will require a move to a certain kind of standardization. "If we're going to reap the benefits of technology, we're going to have to be standardized in the food and software industries," he says.

Purchase orders look different from one buyer another, he explains. With standardization, all players would use consistent nomenclature. An order for "large oranges" from one company will mean the same thing as "large oranges" from another. "I think everyone would like to see a standard," Kirkey adds. Before that time comes, though, he sees an interim growth in the use of "middleware" or software that translates one buyer's forms into another.

With R&D, software vendors are racing to offer new functions to increase their customers' efficiency and productivity. "It's a crazy business because it's changing so fast," says John Deere's Waters.

pb



A Tour Of Georgia Produce

Inside:

- Interview With Tommy Irvin, Georgia Commissioner of Agriculture
- Retail Buyers Guide
- Promoting Georgia Grown
- Local To Global
- Going To Market
- Muscadines Fill Niche Market

SPECIAL ADVERTISING SECTION



Interview With Tommy Irvin, Georgia Commissioner of Agriculture

The country's longest-serving agriculture commissioner shares his thoughts.



By DAVE DIVER

In 1968 Tommy Irvin was winning his first election to be Georgia's Commissioner of Agriculture and I was working in Atlanta for Kroger. Several years later, I transferred out of state and lost track of local Georgia elections.

Upon hearing Tommy Irvin was up for re-election in 2006, my initial thought was this must be his son or some other relative. Not so! Commissioner Irvin was elected last year to his 10th four-year term in 2006 and began his 39th year in office. He is the longest-serving agriculture commissioner in the country, a feat that could only be accomplished because of his record serving the agricultural interests of the state.

Commissioner Irvin was gracious enough to take time from a busy schedule to provide the following answers to our questions.

You've spent a lot of time with trade missions to other countries. What have been the benefits?

Georgia must compete in the world trade zone. We have been successful in opening up markets from Rus-

sia to China as well as in Europe and Central America. Of course, we have had long-time trade involvement with Canada. Trade with these countries allows their people to be able to obtain reasonably priced food leading to improved political relations.

Immigration is a topic on everyone's mind. How can the differences be resolved?

For agriculture, this is an industry issue that needs to be resolved outside of the political arena. The broader issue needs to be resolved.

Georgia farmers are in the basic business of growing food at a reasonable price. We need to endorse a way to keep these production and packing workers here; otherwise agriculture will be seriously handicapped and cheap food will disappear when supplies are unable to meet consumer demand.

Food safety has become a major topic for the fresh fruit and vegetable industry in the last year. What is Georgia doing about this problem?

A major mission of my administration has been increasing food safety standards. We started a Good Agricultural Practices [GAP] program as we entered this millennium. The staff is committed to the program with inspection and testing.

Traceability has also become very important. Georgia producers recognize the importance of food safety for the consuming public.

A new farm bill is in the process of being discussed in Congress. What do you believe will be the outcome?

There are going to be some small cuts in total dollars being allocated to agriculture. I'm in favor of seeing some shift of dollars from basic to specialty crops, which will help fresh fruit and vegetable producers. Remember there are always tradeoffs when a new bill is written.

Future commissioners of agriculture are going to have a challenge continuing your rate of progress. What suggestions do you have for future growth?

The mission needs to involve everyone as a team. The Farm Bureau, the commodity commissions, the University of Georgia College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, as well as other agricultural entities must maintain close common ties with the state Department of Agriculture for future programming.

For example, the University of Georgia College of Agriculture's development of new cultivars helps improve production of consumer-demanded products, and the royalties paid by growers help fund programs for additional future development. It's a winning, never-ending cycle if everyone's goals are consistent.

Thank you, Commissioner Irvin.

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A Tour Of Georgia Produce

The state's bounty of fresh fruit, vegetables and nuts appeals to consumers everywhere.

By Dave Diver

For most retail buyers and merchandisers, one of the most important requirements leading to successful performance is first-hand knowledge of the country's major growing areas acquired through personal visitation. Fortunately, the Georgia Department of Agriculture (GDA), Atlanta, GA, offers retailers tours of the state, which ranks fifth in the nation's fresh fruit and vegetable output.

Large individual producers also offer visits. R. E. Hendrix of Hendrix Produce, Metter, GA, says, "Greater retail consolidation has led to continual buyer turnover, many of whom may find themselves unable to relate to the variants of the grower/shipper world.

On a recent GDA tour, marketing coordinators Jason Deal and Greg Peacock provided this Savannah, GA, resident the opportunity to learn firsthand about Georgia fresh fruit and vegetable production and marketing. Not only were they knowledgeable about the area, but their contacts with growers brought a better understanding of the various crops being produced and the marketing challenges the industry faces.

Gerrald's Vidalia Sweet Onions, Inc., Statesboro, GA, grows everything from onions to melons to carrots and peanuts. President Terry Gerrald says, "Growers' success enables American consumers to eat the best, safest and cheapest food grown on earth."

NOTHING LIKE VIDALIA ONIONS

Mention Georgia produce to consumers and sweet Vidalia onions are the first item that come to mind. Consequently, they have become one of the most identifiable produce brands on the market.

John Shuman, president of Cobbtown, GA-based Shuman Produce, a marketing company whose products are marketed under the Real-sweet brand, says consumers associate sweets onions with the Vidalia name. "It's become its own category."

According to the Vidalia Onion Committee (VOC), Vidalia, GA, only onions grown on acreage located in 20 counties are classified

as Vidalia onions. Prior to March 1 of each year, Vidalia onion growers and packers are required to register with the Georgia Marketing Division and meet the requirements of the Vidalia Onion Act of 1986. Coupled with a specified list of varieties continuously being improved, this contributes to the consistent sweet flavor and increasing production.

Today, agricultural practices have become sophisticated. On Hendrix Farms, a global positioning system (GPS) program helps measure production results relating to soil samples and onion pungency testing over 2½ acre grids. These results enable the application of fertilizer and fungicides with pinpoint accuracy rather than the former shotgun methodology that used the same inputs and practices for an entire field.

Many Vidalia onion growers remark that a rotation including corn leads to a reduction of diseases in the soil and improves future production.

All these practices have led to substantial increases in yields per acre that more than offset gradual declines in acreage being harvested in recent years. Since the use of controlled-atmosphere storage extends the sweet onion

selling season until September, consumers are purchasing smaller size retail units more consistently over a longer time period, which brings improved consumer satisfaction and greater per capita consumption.

Initially, most Vidalia onions were shipped in 25-pound or larger units for retail bulk displays. Now onions are sized and packed in individual units of two pounds and larger. Each onion should have a Vidalia sticker attached. The small consumer units enable suppliers to provide expanded merchandising messages including usage, nutrition and recipes.

Sloan Lott, sales manager for Bland Farms, Vidalia, GA, says "Bruising is a far greater enemy of onions than heat that may reach up to 100 degrees Fahrenheit. One of the best ways to minimizing bruising is having packing lines that minimize the amount of drop as the onions go from one conveyor to the next.

Delbert Bland, managing member, says the company is adding an additional computerized sizing/packing line next year to reduce bruising and increase production.

Although organic has become an operative term for retailers, most growers are waiting for demand to substantially increase before planting more organic product. "Organics are not only more expensive, but they are also more difficult to grow," explains Gerrald's Gerrald.

On the other hand, Bland finds organics have been a positive factor leading to overall increased demand for Vidalias.

Both Rick Berry of Oconee River Produce, Inc., Mt. Vernon, GA, and R.E. Hendrix acknowledge the challenge of managing the flow of product coming to market as prices generally decline at the end of May with harvest in full swing before starting to rebound at the beginning of July.

Many view Vidalia onions as strictly seasonal, but with the consolidation of retail buying groups, growers must maintain contact with buyers throughout the year. Bland Farms reaches this goal by having year-round sales





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growth that obviously transcends the delineated Vidalia growing region. Claiming to be the largest Vidalia grower and marketer, Bland Farms is purchasing an operation in McCrae, GA, and will be packaging a portion of its production under the Del Monte label next year.

Vidalia onions are the most popular crop for Claxton, GA-based Antioch Farms, Inc., says owner Ralph Cavender. "We plant seed in mid September, plant the seedlings in November and December, and market them from April through August," he says.

To maintain year-round relationships with customers, Antioch hosts in-store "meet the

customer" days. "This allows us to stay in touch with our customers and keep them updated," he adds.

Shuman says Shuman Produce, whose Vidalia onions account for about 60 percent of all sales, stays connected with buyers year-round because retailers are demanding sweet onions and other vegetables year-round. "This is a good reason why growers should diversify and utilize their infrastructures year-round."

Andrew Scott, sales and procurement manager for General Produce, Inc., Forrest Park, GA, agrees, adding that his company has expanded to become the largest full-line

wholesale produce house in the southeast. "We buy product all over the United States, everything under the sun, but we carry a large

amount of Georgia-grown product when it's in season." Located at the Georgia State Farmers Market about 10 miles south of Atlanta, General Produce grows local produce such as watermelons, peaches, corn, bell peppers, cucumbers and carrots.

Wendy Brannen, VOC executive director, is very pleased with this year's response to the VOC's National Retail Display Contest. This year's contest rewards store employees at all levels for activities related to onion displays.



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This year's National Consumer Recipe Contest, which was Internet- and satellite media-based, has generated excellent consumer interest. Together, these contests have stimulated demand to meet the increased supply. "The display material usage increased nearly five times as independent and smaller chains became the largest users," Brannen notes.

Brannen spends considerable time speaking with consumers and retailers to provide the input for future marketing programs. "Two new marketing programs are in the works for next year and an all-day planning session will be held shortly," she says.

GEORGIA VEGETABLES ARE INTEGRATED TO YEAR-ROUND PROGRAM

Fresh vegetable production and marketing takes on numerous business approaches. Southern Valley Fruit and Vegetable in Norman Park, GA, grows a spring and fall vegetable crop in Georgia as well as off-season crops in the Yucatan peninsula of Mexico to enable the company to supply year-round produce.

Steve Mathis, who manages the winter Yucatan harvesting operation, indicates, "We

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have daily container delivery by ship into the port at Panama City, FL. From time of packing in the Yucatan, fresh vegetables arrive at the Georgia facility in three days."

During the spring and fall seasons, both the Green Giant and Southern Valley labels are packed. Green Giant is packed to order and shipped to all 48 states since Southern Valley is the exclusive Green Giant packer for the vegetables it provide. Some product for Green Giant is also consumer-unit tray-packed for retailers. The Southern Valley label is packed as harvested and primarily shipped to receivers in the eastern two-thirds of the United States.

ed States.

The only Georgia crop grown by Antioch Farms during the fall months is organic sweet potatoes. Grown during September and October, organic sweet potatoes can be very lucrative, particularly as consumers begin to demand more organic produce, Antioch's Cavender says.

Gibbs Patrick Jr., president of Omega, GA-based Patrick Farms, Inc., says his farm's Georgia-grown commodities include bell peppers, cucumbers, squash, personal watermelons, cantaloupes, eggplants, turnips, mustard greens, collard greens, kale, jalapeños and

strawberries.

"We grow all mixed vegetables in April, May, June, July, September, October and November," Patrick says.

"We grow turnips, mustard greens, collard greens and kale leaves in September until June of the next year for year-round sales."

Jon Schwalls, director of operations, claims, "Southern is the largest producer of pole-grown vegetables such as cucumbers, eggplant and squash, which provide improved appearance, longer shape, darker color and improved shelf life."

Lewis Taylor Farms, Inc., Tifton, GA, approaches the year-round selling concept by having its sales handled by Rosemont Farms, Boca Raton, FL, allowing president Bill Brim and his associates to focus on the production from approximately 4,000 acres. "Costs of production have increased nearly 50 percent since 2000, leaving little to cover fixed costs after



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paying for the variable inputs for production and packing," he says. Brim is also president of the Georgia Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association (GFVGA), LaGrange, GA, and a member of United's Government Council.

Particularly challenging for Georgia vegetable growers is the spring overlap with the Florida and Mexico growing seasons, causing markets to decline at the very beginning of shipments to market. This is just the opposite seasonality result growers from these and other producing areas generally encounter.

In addition to conventional crop production, Georgia farmers also grow transplants for their own use and to sell to others, thus balancing workloads and providing an alternative income source.

Besides following Georgia Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs), Georgia growers use country-of-origin labeling that provides traceability since some shipments are sent to Canada.

Oconee's Berry has a different type of operation, packing product from 10 growers locat-

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ed in 10 different counties and shipping 22 fresh fruit and vegetables, some of which are certified organic. Approximately half of these growers are GAP-certified, but all provide product traceability. To provide year-round shipping, during the summer months Osconee brings in produce from southern Ohio. Berry claims all the Ohio produce meets the same consistent quality standards established during the Georgia producing seasons.

Oconee's Georgia grown products include 450 acres of Vidalia onions, many of which find the way into controlled-atmosphere storage at the Mount Vernon, CA packing facility.

Harry Shaeffer with Lake Park, GA-base Marker 29 Produce, says his company provides its customers with fresh produce in July and August — the two months when they do not ship any Georgia products — by bringing in produce from Florida, North Carolina, Michigan and a few other locations up and down the eastern U.S.

"We talk to our customers every day, get to know them and build relationships," Shaeffer says. "This is important because when things get tight, they know they're going to get taken care of."

Patrick Farms' Patrick agrees that it's critical for growers to maintain a close relationship with buyers year-round with buyers. "The windows we have for our mixed vegetable program is fast and it takes good employees and service to meet the needs of our dedicated customers," he says. "We do this through dedication to our customers and a solid focus on service and food safety."

Lyons, GA-based L.G. Herndon Jr. Farms' most popular Georgia-grown commodities include Vidalia onions, sweet corn, and a variety of greens. The farm harvests its onions from April to September, while corn is pulled in June and July, and greens are harvested year-round.

But, from July to October, owner and president Bo Herndon, says he outsources to farms in North and South Carolina, Ohio and Michigan. During slower seasons, Herndon says it's important to keep buyers informed.

"Staying in contact with customers day in and day out gives them a better idea of what you're doing," Herndon says. "If you talk to people once a year or once every six months, you're not going to do as much business. Good business relationships will help you better promote your products and thus move more product."

James Kilby, salesman for Georgia Vegetable Co., Inc., Tifton, GA, says Georgia's season runs in two parts — the first half of May to the Fourth of July and September through to Thanksgiving. A grower of many different products, Georgia Vegetable's Georgia crops include snap beans, yellow squash, zucchini,

cucumbers, bell peppers and eggplant.

"We're a family-owned business so it's important that we operate year-round in some capacity," he says. "In the summertime, we ship products from Michigan, the Carolinas and Tennessee."

Gerrald's Gerrald has begun growing carrots and has plans to harvest around 400 acres beginning next March. Previously sold to repackers in 25- and 50-pound units, regular and baby carrot cellos will be available for retail and foodservice customers next year.



GEORGIA FRUIT — GOOD NEWS/BAD NEWS

Easter morning this year brought a once-in-a-decade ambush to peach, blueberry and pecan growers. The unexpected heavy frost — and in some cases freeze — nearly wiped out this year's production. The good news, if there is such a thing, is the year after this kind of disaster usually finds the damaged plants producing above average volume. Given that expectation, buyers should start penciling in those Georgia shippers now for next year's promotion calendar.

Frost was not the only abnormal weather element affecting the first half of the year's growing conditions. The operative word throughout most of Georgia was drought. Those buyers familiar with Georgia agriculture know most growers, set up with irrigation equipment, often find themselves better able to control watering needs than if rainfall had been excessive.

Bill McGehee of Big 6 Farms in Fort Valley, GA, is upbeat about the peach industry even though this year saw the Georgia peach pro-





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duction plunge nearly three-quarters from recent year's volume. "New varieties during the last 10 years are gradually improving the overall level of taste," he says. "The proven early Flavor Rich variety is now in its sixth year" and is receiving encouraging retailer acceptance. As new orchards are planted, site selection for good soils and air drainage to minimize frost effects will enhance peach condition.

Although production begins in May and continues through August, the overlap with the Carolinas can be a plus. The two areas together can compensate for each other. When one has a production gap, the other is usually in a position to be a backup to help fulfill promotion activity plans of buyers.

"A producing advantage for Georgia peach growers is the proximity to major markets," McGehee says. The five million-plus metro Atlanta population has one of the fastest growth rates in the country and is only a few hours away from the growing areas. Other rapidly growing areas throughout the Southeast provide excellent easy-to-reach sales opportunities. Areas within a perimeter from Dallas, TX, to Chicago, IL, to New York, NY, are reachable the following day.

McGehee believes the product does the talking. With this in mind and with new varieties coming into production, promotions for

2008 are being developed to focus on both retailers and consumers.

And as Georgia production falls into a marketing sweet spot from the end of April to late June, blueberries are another major fruit being made available year-round. With demand increasing yearly, retailers have easily absorbed production increases from acreage growing by 15 to 20 percent per year.

A range of package sizes from 4.4-ounce clamshells to full pints enables shippers to easily cope with declining prices brought about by increased supplies. Changing the size of the consumer unit keeps price points in a more consistent identifiable range.

With more attention being paid to blueberry nutrition attributes, improved varieties producing larger size and more favorable fruit have made them increasingly attractive to consumers. The University of Georgia has even more promising varieties in the pipeline for future production.

Stanley Scarborough of Sunny Ridge Farm, Winter Haven, FL, says, "In 2008, they will conduct a pilot program of package dating and coding to provide traceability back to the farm and enable retailers to provide easier rotation." The combination of product improvement and greater adherence to the cold chain will meet Scarborough's objective of "achiev-

ing fresher, better tasting berries for the consumer." In turn everyone from grower to consumer will share benefits.



THE STRENGTH OF GEORGIA PECANS

Pecan growers throughout Georgia look to nut shellers and marketers such as Marty Harrell, owner of the Harrell Nut Company, Camilla, GA, to sell their crop. "Georgia is the largest producer in the U.S., closely followed by Texas and rapidly increasing pecan producer New Mexico," Harrell explains. Even though some areas were affected by frost, Georgia should retain its No. 1 position this year.

Duke Lane III, vice president of sales for Lane Packing Company, Fort Valley, GA, agrees. "People recognizing the nutritional value of pecans has really helped drive the demand," he says.

Lane Packing's top Georgia crops include pecans and peaches. Lanes says the growing season for pecans is between October and Jan. 1. Lane's pecan crops are harvested across 2,000 acres.

He says Georgia pecans offer consumers a distinct level of quality unlike pecans from other growing areas. "They're desirable," Lane says. "We do as good of a job as anybody else."

Retailers selling shelled pecans from produce department displays year-round are finding sales increases far exceeding the sales level when pecans and other shelled nuts were found only in grocery department baking sections. "The addition of zip-locked packaging has helped increase sales of larger-size consumer units, although over-wrapped trays still sell well in a few markets," Harrell says.

Consumers can expect stable-to-increased pricing even as production increases because China and Hong Kong are growing export markets. The ability to use the heart-healthy symbol on pecan packages has increased consumer interest and consumption. Seven years of research show nuts have climbed to the top of the healthful snack list with pecans the top provider of antioxidants, according to a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) study. Eating 1½ ounces of pecans daily has shown to lower LDL cholesterol by up to 13 percent.

Georgia fresh fruit and vegetable production, while ranking behind California and Florida, is important to retailers and foodservice operators everywhere. These previously mentioned commodities may account for the largest proportion of producing acreage buyers may want to tour, but learning more about the state's important growing niches, such as muscadine grapes, (please see page GA19) is also beneficial.

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GEORGIA FRUIT & VEGETABLE GROWERS ASSOCIATION

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A C Produce / Fred Paulk 912-534-5700 Fax: 912-534-5479				X				X				X											X					
Antioch Farms, Inc. / Ralph Cavender 912-739-0171 Fax: 912-739-0465																			X						X		X	
Baker Farms / Joe Baker 229-769-3218 Fax: 229-769-3991				X				X				X			X								X					
Baxley Sunbelt Blueberry Corp Jane Morris 229-367-4634 Fax: 229-367-7042						X																						
Bland Farms / Michael Hively 912-654-1426 Fax: 912-654-1330			X									X															X	
Borders Melons East / Mark Paulk 229-896-1895 Fax: 229-896-1774				X				X				X											X					X
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GEORGIA FRUIT & VEGETABLE GROWERS ASSOCIATION RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE

COMPANY INFORMATION	APPLES	ASIAN PEARS	BEANS	BELL PEPPERS	BLACKBERRIES	BLUEBERRIES	BUTTER BEANS	CABBAGE	CANTALOUPE	CARROTS	CORN	CUCUMBERS	EGGPLANT	GRAPES	GREENS	MUSCADINE	OKRA	PEACHES	PEANUTS	PEAS	PECANS	SPECIALTY	PEPPERS	SQUASH	STRAWBERRIES	SWEET POTATOES	TOES	TOMATOES
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Keystone Fruit Marketing/ Kurt Schweitzer 717-597-2112 Fax: 717-597-4096	X																	X								X		
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Sanders Farms, Inc. / David Sanders 912-565-7477 Fax: 912-565-7578			X					X				X														X		
Shuman Produce, Inc. / John G. Shuman 912-557-4477 Fax: 912-557-4478																										X		
Smith Produce / The Pea House / Eric Smith 229-273-9810							X												X									
South Georgia Produce/ David Corbett 229-559-6071 Fax: 229-559-4955				X				X				X	X										X					
Southern Grace Farms / Timothy Mcmillan 229-533-7965 Fax: 229-533-3058					X														X					X				
Southern Valley / Wanda Taylor 912-769-3676 Fax: 912-769-3397				X				X				X																
Southern Valley Fruit & Vegetable / Dug Schwalls 229-769-3676 Fax: 229-769-5800				X				X	X			X	X										X				X	
Stanley Farms / R.T. Stanley, Jr 912-526-3575 Fax: 912-526-3705				X								X														X		

GEORGIA FRUIT & VEGETABLE GROWERS ASSOCIATION RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE

COMPANY INFORMATION	APPLES	ASIAN PEARS	BEANS	BELL PEPPERS	BLACKBERRIES	BLUEBERRIES	BUTTER BEANS	CABBAGE	CANTALOUPE	CARROTS	CORN	CUCUMBERS	EGGPLANT	GRAPES	GREENS	MUSCADINE	OKRA	PEACHES	PEANUTS	PEAS	PECANS	SPECIALTY PEPPERS	SQUASH	STRAWBERRIES	SWEET POTATOES	TOMATOES	VIDALIA ONIONS	WATERMELON
Still Pond Farms / Charles W Cowart, Jr 229-792-6382 Fax: 229-792-3944														X		X												
Sun Burst Farms, Inc. / Wendell Sumner 229-528-6692 Fax: 229-528-6692									X																			X
Sunnyridge Farms, Inc. / Stanley Gh 863-294-8856 Fax: 863-595-4095					X																							
Sweet Corn Co-Op, Inc / Carl T. Lynn 229-774-2332 Fax: 229-774-2873											X																	
J. Taylor Farms / Johnny Taylor - 912-294-8763			X	X						X	X	X	X										X					
Timothy M. Pittman / Timothy M. Pittman 912-565-7055 Fax: 912-565-7699							X			X							X		X			X						
Valdosta Plant Co., Inc. / Tom Daughtrey 229-896-4802 Fax: 229-896-3020																									X			
Valley Shore Farms / Joe McQueen 229-985-1639 Fax: 229-985-0865							X																					
Van Solkema Produce, / Jerry Van Solkema 616-878-1508 Fax: 616-878-1432							X						X		X								X					X
Veazey Plant Co., Inc / Johnny Veazey 229-382-6443 Fax: 229-382-7100													X										X		X	X	X	
Veitch blue Berry Farm / Herschel J. Veitch 850-593-5753					X																							
Waites Farm / Darrell Waites - 229-324-3175				X								X											X					
Walter P. Rawl & Sons/ Charles Wingard 803-894-1900 Fax: 803-894-1645															X													
Wavell Robinson Farms / Wavell Robinson 229-859-2011 Fax: 229-859-2043																												X
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Reader Service # 102

Promoting Georgia Grown

Harveys highlights Georgia Grown produce

By Dave Diver



Locally grown has become more significant in recent months as consumers look for freshness, reduced transportation costs and nutritious food.

For years, Georgia has provided retailers with signs and logos identifying Georgia Grown product. Among retailers effectively implementing the program is the 68-store Nashville, TN-based Harveys Supermarkets — nearly all of which are in small- to medium-size markets throughout Georgia. Promoting Georgia Grown produce has become a win-win program for growers, consumers and the company. Even though Brussels, Belgium-based Delhaize acquired Harveys in 2004, the local marketing program has continued.

From April through December, nearly every ad features locally grown items with the Georgia Grown logo and appropriate signing at store level. Michael Purvis, director of produce operations, is able to utilize the company print shop to obtain any type of sign needed to support the program and draw customer attention to Georgia Grown.

Produce buyer Joyce Swindle works with a substantial number of growers who provide the large variety of vegetables, fruit and melons delivered to the distribution center for delivery to stores three times a week. Highly perishable greens and okra are often delivered

directly from the farm to most stores enabling the consumer to receive maximum freshness.



Purvis and Swindle recognize many of their customers have different consumption habits than those in cities such as Atlanta, Augusta, and Savannah. As an example, seedless watermelon is the primary seller in most metropolitan markets. But in Harveys, seeded melons outsell seedless nearly two to one, presenting a substantial procurement challenge especially around the summer holidays. While many large chains sell only whole melons, Harveys produce departments still cut melons into halves, quarters and slices.

One of the Georgia Grown programs labels watermelon grown in Georgia, but packed in Florida with the Florida shipper's address. Customer reaction initially is, "Where are my favorite Georgia melons?"

Although Harveys stores may be somewhat smaller in volume than those of larger chains operating in metropolitan markets, fast turnover provides the freshest possible product. Up-to-date sales information provides a guide to proper allocation of product on display.

While one might expect most vegetables to be displayed only in bulk, a substantial number is available tray-packed, providing another opportunity to use Georgia Grown labels.

In keeping with local consumer interest, shelled beans and Muscadine grapes are noticeably displayed and sell well. The majority of customers prefer to purchase Muscadines in varying amounts. Consequently, these are still primarily displayed bulk while the majority of industry sales are in consumer clamshell units.

Harveys understands its customers' interest in produce. The company knows they like local Georgia Grown and have long-time interest in how they purchase product. Recognizing the interests of its customers and fulfilling them have helped produce departments become a key for a successful supermarket operation. **GA**

Local To Global

Georgia producers are mindful of their own backyards as well as the world stage.

By Dave Diver

To stimulate Georgia Grown produce programs, GDA places ads in newspapers throughout the state. TV advertising calls attention to the availability at strategic times during the growing season. The consumer finds Georgia Grown display materials reinforcing the message at the point of sale.

GDA marketing coordinators assist producers in grading, packaging, quality and inspection. They also act as liaisons between producers and buyers to assist producers locate potential markets for their products and assist with promotional activities throughout the state, including assistance to State Farmers Market managers.

The network of State Farmers Markets is among the largest in the country. The Atlanta

farmers market has the largest volume and continues increasing in the wholesale division.

The Cordele Farmers Market provides a retail operation for local residents and a wholesale section to sell melons grown in Georgia and Florida. During the pre-Fourth of July selling season, buyers frequently wait outside the gates making their commitments before the melons even enter the grounds.

Other principal farmers markets are in Augusta, Columbus, Macon, Savannah and Thomasville. Additional markets open on a seasonal basis in a number of growing areas.

As buying concentration has increased, so too has the concentration of production involved in international trade. On the

one hand, GDA's efforts are an attempt to increase exports around the world.

In May 2007, Commissioner Irvin appointed Terry Coleman, long time Georgia legislator, to the post of deputy commissioner of agriculture. One of his duties is to work with the state's International Trade Team.

Georgia producers grow and pack foreign-grown produce for importing and marketing in the off-season. No longer is the agricultural distribution system a one-product seasonal venture for individual grower shippers. What was once a production mentality now requires marketing and promotion on the local and the international scene.

GA



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Reader Service # 86

Going To Market

Wholesalers play vital role in *Georgia Grown* activities.

By Amy Shannon

As the market for Georgia-grown produce expands, wholesalers continue to play a large role in activities from the farm to the retailer.

General Produce Company, Ltd., Forest Park, GA, runs its own retail supermarket division, says Andrew Scott, sales and procurement manager. The division makes up 25 percent of the company's produce sales. "We've partnered up with some of the country's best

service wholesalers and retailers, such as Supervalu, Nash Finch and Ira Higdon," he says. The company's top Georgia-grown crops that it markets include carrots, corn, watermelon, cucumbers and bell peppers.

The Produce Exchange of Atlanta at the Atlanta State Farmer's Market in Forest Park, GA, works with a mix of grocery chains, "down home" mom-and-pop restaurants and other foodservice businesses, says manager Chris Grizzaffe.

Similarly, Nickey Gregory, president and owner of family-owned and -operated Nickey Gregory Company, LLC, also at the Atlanta State Farmer's Market, works mostly with small foodservice companies and some retailers.

In terms of growers, Gregory works with a "ton of small farms from all over," including Morven, GA-based Dewitt Produce Company, Inc., and Hopeful, GA-based Hugh Branch, Inc.

Grizzaffe works with multiple shippers and some brokers year-round in order to provide customers with the freshest produce at good prices. "Most of our products are coming from up north right now," he explains.

"We don't have much coming from Georgia this summer, especially with the record heat we've been experiencing." During season, however, his locally grown commodities include green beans, cucumbers, eggplant and zucchini.

Gregory, whose top locally grown commodities include greens, cucumbers, bell peppers, squash and peaches, says Georgia's season runs from April to November. "In the spring, we mostly deal with produce in southern Georgia," he notes. "That switches to North Georgia in August. By the time September and October roll around, we're doing a little bit from both North and South Georgia."

Although he deals with produce from outside the state, Gregory says Georgia-grown produce is some of the best in the country because it is grown on small, family-owned farms.

"We have a tremendous amount of small farmers," he says. "They do a super job. I think they give their produce more of a personal touch." **GA**



GEORGIA

FRUIT & VEGETABLE HARVEST SEASON

COMMODITY	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
APPLES												
BELL PEPPERS												
BLUEBERRIES												
CABBAGE												
CARROTS												
CUCUMBERS												
FIELD PEAS												
GRAPES												
GREENS												
MELONS												
MUSCADINES												
PECANS												
PEACHES												
SNAP BEANS												
STRAWBERRIES												
SWEET CORN												
SWEET POTATOES												
TOMATOES												
VIDALIA ONIONS												
YELLOW SQUASH												
ZUCCHINI												

Muscadines Fill Niche Market

Southern favorite appeals to consumers' nutritional demands.

By Dave Diver

Although relatively small in total volume, Muscadine grapes offer health-conscious consumers a multitude of sought-after antioxidant benefits.

Thanks to research done by University of Georgia College of Pharmacy professors Diane Hartle, Phillip Greenspan and James Hargrove, the health benefits of Muscadines are well documented. In their book *Muscadine Medicine*, they "discuss health benefits of the many phyto-

chemicals in Muscadines and alert consumers to new products, so the Muscadine can become a daily health habit even when the fresh fruit is unavailable."

According to Gary Paulk of Paulk Vineyards, headquartered in Wray, GA, "Muscadines are sold mostly in the Southeast and in large city markets, such as Chicago, Detroit, and New York City, where large numbers of southerners settled after World War II. Many of these transplanted southerners still remember Mus-

cadines, making them an ideal product for the Georgia Grown label.

Approximately 80 percent of Muscadines, harvested in August and September, are marketed fresh with the majority being sold in clamshells weighing up to 20 ounces. Most of the balance, formerly culls, are sold for juice.

"Products are not over-produced, they are undersold," Paulk believes. **GA**



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Shannon Vineyards	GA15	35	912-857-3876	305-675-3876
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Photo courtesy of Idaho Potato Commission

Retailers can use Idaho potatoes' premium status to increase sales.

BY LYNN GALANIS

As a standard grocery list item, potatoes practically sell themselves.

But why not make them work harder? In addition to the usual 5-pound bag, grocers can entice shoppers to buy a perfect pair of Idaho bakers for that special dinner and a package of Idaho fingerlings, both at higher profit margins than the bag. If potatoes are a kitchen staple, Idaho potatoes can be marketed as specialty items that elevate the status of meals.

"Idaho is known around the world as synonymous with pota-

atoes," says Seth Pemsler, vice president of retail/international for the Idaho Potato Commission, Eagle, ID. "It's perceived to be the best quality, the No. 1 best potato they could buy. So, from a retailer's perspective, we tell them if you want to stock a less expensive potato from another state, you should have a premium potato because there are going to be times when the meal really matters. If the consumer perceives Idaho potatoes to be the very best — and the consumer does because we've been developing the brand for the last 70 years — you need to have them in your stores."

Ryan Bybee, sales manager for GPOD of Idaho, Shelley, ID,

Contest Motivates Retailers To Put Spuds On Display

The photos you see here are of the winning stores for the most recent Idaho Potato Lovers Month Display Contest, which is now in its 17th year. In the past three years, the Idaho Potato Commission (IPC), Eagle, ID, has partnered with Kraft for this competition, and stores have completely made over their Idaho potato displays to participate.

There are three categories of five winners each, based on the number of registers in a store. The top five in each category receive \$1,250, \$1,000, \$750, \$500 and \$250. Along with those 15 prizes, 100 stores get honorable mentions and \$100. Every entrant also gets a premium, such as a TV, a DVD player or an MP3 player.

To enter the contest, stores must submit a photograph of their Idaho potato display, which must include a dehydrated Idaho potato as well as two of three specified Kraft products.

"We also have a military overlay. Because the military can't take cash prizes, we have a completely separate contest for the commissaries, and we get phenomenal entries," says Seth Pemsler, IPC vice president retail/international. "They send in picture booklets, they send in videos, they send in plays. I mean, it's just amazing what they do. They find it a great opportunity to utilize their creativity at a very slow time of year."

Judging by the winners, that creativity pays off, as does the display's applicability to Potato Lovers Month, Kraft, and, of course, Idaho potatoes.

All the photos below of winning entries are courtesy of the Idaho Potato Commission.

The picture on page 119 is of the \$1,250 first-place cash prize winner in the 1-5 cash register category, submitted by Jeff Stewart, Piggly Wiggly, Bonifay, FL.



Photo courtesy of Wada Farms

This winning display, showcasing the healthful attributes of Idaho potatoes, won the \$1,250 first-place cash prize in the 10+ Cash Registers category. It was submitted by Brett Reed, produce manager of Hy-Vee Food Stores in Windsor Heights, IA.



This Idaho potato display, featuring a potato heart for Potato Lover's Month won a \$250 cash prize in the 10+ cash register category. Jon Duff, produce manager of Hy-Vee Food Stores in Maryville, MO, submitted the entry.



This winning display, showcasing a *Dancing with the Spuds* theme, won a \$1,250 first-place cash prize in the 6-9 cash register category. It was submitted by Donna Shuey of Slone's Signature Market in Jackson, KY.



The \$1,250 first-place cash prize in the Ad Overlay contest went to Jeff Stewart, produce manager of Piggly Wiggly, Bonifay, FL.



adds, "Price is not always the best determining factor whether to buy. Today's consumers are more and more willing to pay for quality, and I think we have to show the consumer, especially with the food-safety issue, that we have good-quality product. And the better they look, the more confident the consumer is in them."

Mark Morell, produce supervisor of the five independent, family-owned Geissler's Supermarkets, based in East Windsor, CT, credits supplier Shapiro Produce, Boston, MA, with bringing him high-quality produce. "They're big buyers up in the Boston market, so they can pull the best of the best, and that's what they give us," he says.

It helps that Idaho potatoes, regardless of shipper or brand, are labeled with their state of origin. However, growers and distributors lament the fact that potatoes are frequently eliminated from the spotlight in favor of fancier produce.

"Potatoes are incredibly profitable, but you don't have a tendency to spend the energy behind them like you do other things because of the perishable issue or because of the seasonal issue," IPC's Pemsler notes. "You know, potatoes are always around. Or it's just a low-interest category because it's not new and sexy. It's not some of this new cool stuff — it's not a grapple, it's not a personal watermelon, it's not a miniature head of lettuce. A lot of those things, especially the leafy things, have very short shelf life, so you better not overbuy," he explains. But if retailers buy too many potatoes, "They can hold them in the back room for an extra two weeks."

Although IPC offers retailers a variety of promotions, point-of-sales materials and

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Reader Service # 92

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recipes, some experts believe they are perhaps underutilized.

"It seems in the last five years or so there are fewer Idaho potato promotions at the retail level, and I think that's a challenge we face," says Jamey Higham, director of business development of Potandon Produce, LLC, Idaho Falls, ID.

"We're seeing fewer promotions of Idaho, and we think that carrying Idaho potatoes and promoting them are two different things," he adds..

"I think if a retailer is flat in the potato category, then promotions are an easy way

to drive sales," Higham continues. "When retailers promote Idaho potatoes, they're more likely to capture that large segment of customers who want and are loyal to Idahos. We tag along with the Idaho Potato Commission, and we support our customers when they want to run a promotion."

SELL MORE POTATOES

According to David Lukens, produce manager for West Point Market in Akron, OH, "One of the biggest challenges we face at this time of the year is the older crop of potatoes, where we start to get a lot of the

blemishes, little cuts, cracks, just due to the fact that we're at the end of last year's crop. They were harvested last fall and we're getting towards the end of the storage cycle. One of the biggest things is, people seem to eat a lot less starch lately, so you've sort of got to be a little bit more creative."

"We'll cross-merchandise," Geissler's Morell offers. "We'll use some grocery items. During the summertime, we'll make a nice big display. We'll have some spray butters and wrap up some potatoes in tin foil, like you'd throw on the grill, and put some salt-and-pepper shakers out there.

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"During the summertime, we'll make a nice big display. We'll have some spray butters and wrap up some potatoes in tin foil and put some salt-and-pepper shakers out there. Tie-ins are huge. It makes everybody in the other departments happy, if we can use them."

Mark Morell
Geissler's Supermarket

Tie-ins are huge. It makes everybody in the other departments happy, if we can use them."

"We're a very customer service-oriented store. We're probably one of the last stores left in America where you still have your produce weighed in the department," Lukens says. "There is always somebody in the department, so people might come ask, 'What's something different I can do tonight with potatoes?' Also, we'll do things from time to time like demos for items. We make really good scalloped potatoes leading up to the holidays. We might make them up one day, sample it out and give out the recipe with them."

One of the key selling points of potatoes is their nutritional value — a topic of high interest to consumers.

"Even though the Atkins diet is obviously dead, and even though we've done lots of

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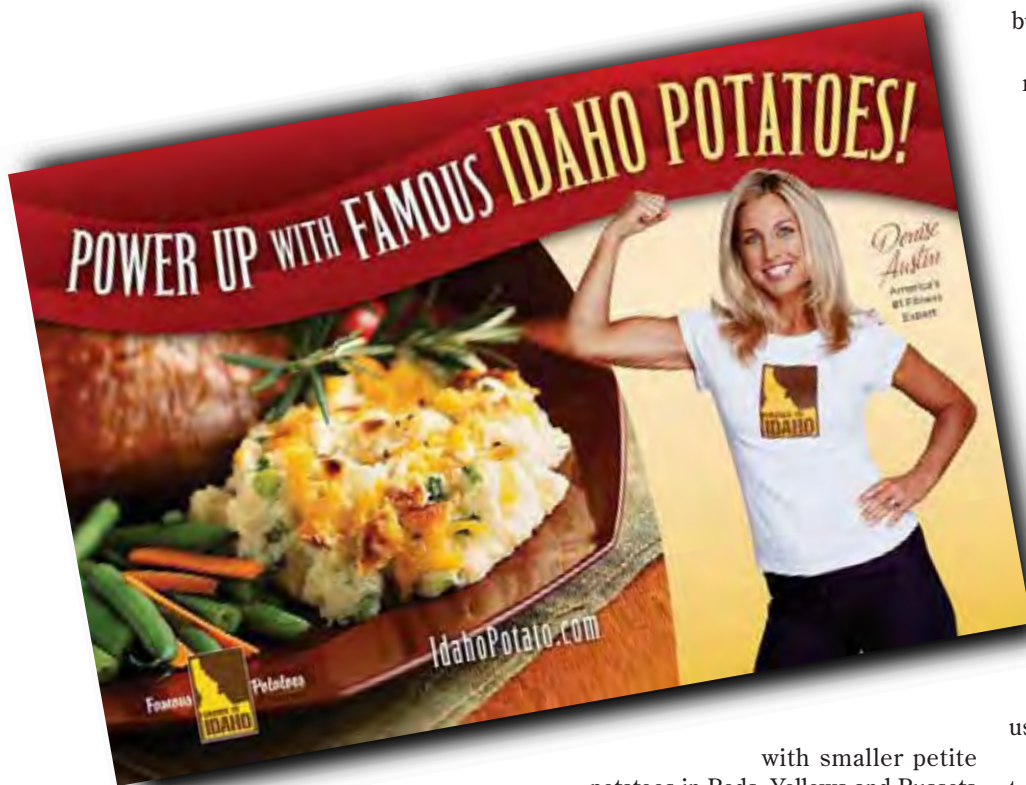
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national advertising to help educate consumers of the nutritional value of a potato, our research shows they all don't know yet," IPC's Pemsler claims. "We offer in-store POS materials, as does the U.S. Potato Board [Denver, CO], that are focused entirely on the nutritional value of potatoes." The ones featuring exercise guru Denise Austin nicely tie potatoes in with physical fitness for the active consumer."

"Potatoes in general, on fresh consumption, have been flat and slightly negative, so there is a big concern, not only with retailers but obviously with potato growers on how to reverse that trend, to get the public more aware of the benefits of potatoes and to get consumption up," notes Kevin Stanger, vice president of marketing, Wada Farms Potatoes, Idaho Falls, ID.

"The challenge is one, to get people eating potatoes in general, and, two, to realize when they're buying potatoes that not all potatoes are Idaho potatoes. That comes down to the retailers promoting them and identifying them correctly so consumers realize they have the choice between an Idaho and a non-Idaho potato," he continues.

Offering easy preparation in the form of value-added products is a way to entice consumers. Wada Farms' individually wrapped potato, the Easy Baker, paved the way for its latest product that has just hit stores.

"This is our Easy Steamer," Stanger says. It's a pound-and-a-half, specially marketed and produced bag for baking and steaming potatoes. We're doing this now

with smaller petite potatoes in Reds, Yellows and Russets in a microwave steamable bag. It just kind of pressure cooks them as it's microwaving and steaming them. You just basically open

"Because of our distance to the East Coast markets, transportation is always a challenge. That's why we use heavy rail."

Kevin Stanger
Wada Farms Potatoes

them up, throw a little parsley on them, maybe mash them once or twice with a fork or however you want to do it. They're absolutely great."

In addition to these innovations, retailers can stock several sizes and colors to provide more visual appeal and taste options.

"One thing I think they could do to help sales is advertise and display the variety of the potato," GPOD's Bybee advises. "There's a lot of different Russet potatoes that are being shipped today. For instance, there's a Russet Burbank, a Russet Norkotah and a Western Russet, which all look very similar

but taste and work differently."

Sometimes, Bybee explains, a consumer may pick up an Idaho Russet potato, but pick up a different Russet the next time they go shopping. "It tastes different. It cooks different. They're saying, 'What's going on here?' So other than put, say, 'Russet potato,' they need to put the variety on their bulk displays."

"We do very few bagged potatoes," says West Point's Luckens, who carries everything from Yukon Golds to C-sized Reds to Klondike Roses. "We're much more of a gourmet market. We're very much a specialty food market."

According to Pemsler, most of the big shippers now offer a full line. Most retailers usually stock them without a second thought, but there are a few retailers who do not carry Idaho potatoes at all, and he believes the reason is usually the cost of shipping.

Stanger agrees. "Because of our distance to the East Coast markets, transportation is always a challenge. That's why we use heavy rail compared to most other states, because our distance and rail has been viable. But because of fuel and road costs, transportation is always a concern. We're always looking to find better, inexpensive ways to improve our transportation methods."

BEST IN CLASS PRACTICES

For retailers without a system for displaying Idaho potatoes, arming themselves with a plan may yield surprising results.

"We also offer category management services, which basically means we will help them look over what they have and find better ways, something the U.S. Potato Board has developed called best in class practices," says Pemsler. Since the U.S. Potato Board works with potatoes from all states, the Idaho Potato Commission can go in and add Idaho-specific nuances and provide recommendations on everything from merchandising and pricing to promotion.

With so many opportunities to increase this category of sales, there is plenty of room for Idaho potatoes to grow at the retail level. A sack of dusty brown potatoes may get thrown in a cart before the consumer heads toward more colorful, better displayed fruits and vegetables. Nicely arranged, well lit boxes of red, white, gold and blue potatoes displayed along with the brown ones add some much needed impact to the area. Provide some meal ideas and recipe cards, and shoppers may be inspired to toss in small containers of gourmet potatoes along with their usual bag of standard spuds. **pb**



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Potatoes Can Drive The Produce Engine

Focus on variety, displays and cross-promotions.

BY BOB JOHNSON

The No. 1 selling item in the produce department is also frequently among the most neglected and overlooked items.

"Potatoes are the largest selling item in the produce department by weight," says Seth Pemsler, vice president for retail and international sales for the Idaho Potato Commission (IPC), Eagle, ID.

Potatoes may be relatively inexpensive, but they are among the top five most profitable categories in the produce department.

According to Ken Gray, vice president of sales and marketing, Bushwick Commission Company, Farmingdale, NY, the cost savings involved in supplying locally grown potatoes are a major factor in potato profitability. "If you can bring in locally grown potatoes, you're really creating a win-win situation because you're saving on freight costs and your consumers are getting the freshest product available."

Even considering all the opportunities for extra sales, some experts say retailers are not taking full advantage of potatoes. "Retailers have a tendency to ignore the potatoes, and that's a mistake," Pemsler notes. "They should pay attention to what they carry, how they price it and how they promote it."

Consumers are becoming more discriminating in most of their product purchases. "It used to be that you would only see red delicious in the apple section and one kind of mushroom, but not any more," says Mac Johnson, vice president for marketing, U.S. Potato Board (USPB), Denver, CO.

The first rule of contemporary potato merchandising is to serve customers who are looking for different kinds and packages of potatoes.

"Carry different varieties," urges Veronica Kraushaar, Nogales, AZ-based Viva Marketing Strategies, which handles communica-



Consumers are looking for a variety of potato options.

tions for the Colorado Potato Administrative Committee, Monte Vista, CO. "Consumers are looking beyond the Russet favorite to other varieties such as Golds, Fingerlings and new specialties like Colorado's exclusive Purple Majesty, which add color and nutrition to the serving. A display featuring multi-varieties in bulk and bags enhances sales."

The right mix of potatoes will depend on consumer demographics. "No more one-size-fits-all for potatoes," she suggests. "Large families buy the large bags and prefer the value Russet. Smaller units buy 2-pounders and clamshells. Hispanics like to select their own in a bulk display."

According to Cliff Corwin, marketing and sales manager, Skagit Valley's Best Produce, Mount Vernon, WA, "In many parts of the country, families are smaller than they used to be. Giving customers a little variety in the size and pack can help. I see some retailers offering 2-, 3- and 5-pound bags with different colors and sizes of potatoes."

Potatoes should also be offered in different size packages at different price levels.

"The bulk, 5- and 10-pound bags of one variety should all be displayed together," Ted Kreis, marketing director, Northern Plains Potato Growers Association (NPPGA), East Grand Forks, MN, says. "There should be different pricing offered — both premium potatoes and bargain priced." NPPGA includes growers from North Minnesota, North Dakota and Eastern Montana, but the bulk of the potatoes are grown in the Red River Valley on the Minnesota/North Dakota border.

Depending on the occasion, consumers may be looking for very different potatoes. "It is critical that the retailer has the right assortment of potatoes at all times because the same customer is buying different varieties, sizes, quantity and quality depending on the occasion," Pemsler says. A consumer might want one sort of potato for a dinner for two but very different potatoes for potato salad or for a barbecue for 20 people.

"No. 1 is offering a good selection and variety of potatoes," USPB's Johnson says. "You need to offer not just Russets but also

Reds, Yukons, Whites, even Fingerlings and Purples in some of the upscale stores."

VARIETY SELLS

A well-stocked potato section must include many potato varieties and colors.

"There are a lot of different Russet varieties and they work differently," explains Ryan Bybee, sales manager, GPOD of Idaho, Shelley, ID. "There are so many varieties and uses that retailers should label them and explain their uses. If they would do that, consumers would know what they were buying."

"It's important to have a good color selection," says Kevin Stanger, vice president of sales and marketing, Wada Farms Potatoes, Idaho Falls, ID. "In addition to the Russets you need your reds and Yukons." In addition to shipping Wada Farms potatoes, Wada also has a marketing partnership agreement with Dole Profresh.

"Consumers should be offered a choice, whether it's Russets, whites, reds or whatever," advises NPPGA's Kreis.

The Red River Valley is known for the naturally darker color of its red potatoes. The potatoes are harvested and transported in cooler weather, which helps keep them fresh. "Most of our fresh potatoes are grown within 30 miles of the river," NPPGA's Kreis says. "We have heavy black soil that produces a good crop of red potatoes. Ninety percent of the Red River Valley potatoes are red potatoes."

The variety of offerings should include some of the growing number of value-added potato products.

"A couple of the new things we are introducing this next month will be our Easy Steamer' and our 'Steakhouse Baker,'" says Wada's Stanger. "The Easy Steamer is big in Europe currently. This is a 1.5-pound bag that pressure cooks and steams the product in the microwave. We'll have these in reds, yellows and Idaho Russets. The Steakhouse Baker is two potatoes that are tray-wrapped and have an enclosed salt packet with instructions to oil and salt each potato to give them that 'steakhouse' taste."

It is important to explain and categorize the uses of different types of potatoes to consumers, according to GPOD's Bybee.

SHOW-AND-SELL TIME

Potatoes are among the driving items in the produce department, but they do not necessarily get prime location. "One of the most important things you can do is make a nice display and make it prominent for people to see," says Mark Turner, Bushwick general manager. "End-cap space is the best. If you make it look nice, people will see it."



"Put your potatoes with your onions and sweet potatoes," he suggests. "You're not going to look for potatoes where the blueberries are."

Many associations are ready to help spiff up the look of the potato display. "We have round dangles that hang over the potatoes with the varieties and nutritional information," explains Karen Lynn-Townshend, market development officer, Prince Edward Island Potato Board (PEIPB), Charlottetown, PEI, Canada. "We also have backers to slip behind the product with pictures of the varieties and their uses."

Many shippers are also ready to offer hands-on help with displays. "It comes down to partnering with the retail stores," says Tim Feit, director of promotions and consumer education, Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers Association, Antigo, WI. "Some of the grower/shippers will take on part of the responsibility of promotion and display."

A good display may include potatoes with associated products. "I saw one retailer display microwavable potatoes with a wrap around them with dips," says PEIPB's Lynn-Townshend. "It really worked."

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Best In Class Program Produces Top Sellers

The U.S. Potato Board (USPB), Denver, CO, is receiving high marks for its Best in Class merchandising and promotion program.

"Some of the best things I have seen are from retailers using the Best in Class program," says Kevin Stanger, vice president of sales and marketing, Wada Farms Potatoes, Idaho Falls, ID.

This comprehensive program, which emphasizes assortment and display strategies based on information about consumers, is working minor miracles in increasing potato sales, and even sales of the entire produce department.

"The stores in the Best in Class program have increased sales anywhere from 4.5 percent to 11 percent," says Mac Johnson, USPB vice president for marketing. "We compare how the store does to the competition. There is a significant increase in pound sales and dollar sales. It also increases the contribution of potatoes to the entire produce department."

The program is built on six key elements — merchandising, assortment, pricing, promotion, packaging and communication.

"We just added communication last year because most of our talk is at the headquarters level and it's important that the store understands what the program is, and how to implement it," Johnson says.

He estimates about 520 stores are already involved in the program. "The stores call us and then we qualify them for the program. We need access to one or two years of point-of-sale data of potatoes and potato products on a weekly basis. It's the only way we can establish a baseline to see where they are missing opportunities."

USPB works with the Perishables Group, Chicago, IL, to analyze how store-by-store demographic information should be trans-

lated into what potato varieties to offer and how to display and promote them.

"We need demographic information on the customer base for each of the stores," Johnson says. "A lower-income neighborhood with working families might want more 10-pound bags, while an upscale store needs smaller packs with more specialty items."

One Midwestern chain in the program, for example, has eight different plans for stores with different customer bases.

"We also need to know if they will involve their suppliers," Johnson says. "We request suppliers be brought into the meeting. This affects them, and they are involved in making it work."

Potato shippers have responded very positively to this program because it offers them a hands-on opportunity to increase sales of their product through a program that works.

"Some Wisconsin shippers have had some good experiences with the Best in Class program," says Tim Feit, director of promotions and consumer education, WI Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers Association, Antigo.

The program aims to increase sales of the entire produce department, not just of the potato products.

"We request data on the overall performance of the produce department, so we can see what contribution the program is making," Johnson says.

The success of the effort is carefully monitored by regularly bringing together the major players who have their own areas of expertise.

"We go out and have monthly meetings to look at sales numbers and review merchandising and promotions efforts, quarterly meetings that involve the suppliers and an annual review," Johnson says. **pb**

"Good signage certainly helps, particularly with unique items like Fingerlings," says USPB's Johnson. "Most consumers don't even know that they exist, let alone how to use them."

Bushwick's Gray believes Wal-Mart does an "excellent job of displaying potatoes in bins" with signage highlighting the area where the potatoes were grown.

Whatever the potato product or variety,

the package must be clean and clear. "Packaging is important," says NPPGA's Kreis. "Clear, uncluttered packaging helps. That's what the customers see before they pick up the product."

PROMOTIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

There is a trend among some retailers to cut back on the time and resources they

devote to promoting potatoes. "Retailers are promoting potatoes less often than they used to," Kreis says.

One reason for the decline in potato promotion might be recent increases in wholesale potato prices. However, potatoes are still a bargain, and consumers can be enticed to pay a few cents more. "Consumers will still buy an item at a higher price if it's promoted," he adds.

When potato sales slow down, promotions should pick up. "One of the big things that works really well is to work with your growers and shippers to run ads and specials when consumption is low," notes GPOD's Bybee. "A lot of retailers will just keep the price the same when sales slow down."

For example, February is a standard time when potato sales slow down. That makes it the right time for promotions. "We have Potato Month displays to draw people to the produce department in February," IPC's Pemsler says.

Gray advises retailers to work with state agriculture officials to coincide in-store promotions with various state programs and initiatives, such as *Jersey Fresh* or *Pride of New York*.

Potato promotion increasingly means cross-promotion with related products. "One thing that I see as a consumer that works is cross promotion," Lynn-Townshend says. "Mix it up and display the potatoes with other products that go with them, like dips or that kind of thing."

Cross-promotion can effectively include meat dishes in a whole-meal promotion. "I really think at certain times of the year cross-merchandising helps, like when you put potatoes with beef or chicken, for example," explains Skagit Valley's Corwin. "In the summer, people don't think of potatoes as a side dish because of the heat. That might be a good time to cross-merchandise."

"One of the things retailers can do is include produce items in full meals or in different menu items," Pemsler suggests. "People don't eat potatoes by themselves. They eat them with a topping or they eat them as part of a meal. By building a display in the produce section, you draw people to the produce department. We are partnering with Fresh Express, Tyson chicken, Fetzer wine, and Lea and Perrins in a broad-scale, full-meal promotion with coupons." He also advises cross-promoting potatoes with cheese or bacon bits.

Retailers can get a lot of help from their friends in the potato industry when it comes to promotion.

"We have point-of-purchase materials and work with our customers who want to do promotions," says Turner from Bush-

wick. "For example we are a New York company and we do *Pride of New York* promotions."

Many crop organizations also offer help with promotions. "We develop four recipes a year that we send out to retailers." PEIPB's Lynn-Townshend relates. "We send out a lot of point-of-purchase materials."

The IPC has four people in the field advising retailers throughout the country on how to manage their potatoes. "We are the experts in the potato category, that's all we do," Pemsler says. "Idaho is really the only brand name in the potato industry. We have

grown the Idaho brand through 50 years of advertising. Idaho is a premium potato, and it is perceived that way by the consumer." Because Idaho potatoes have established a brand name, Pemsler believes retailers can charge a 10 to 20 percent premium.

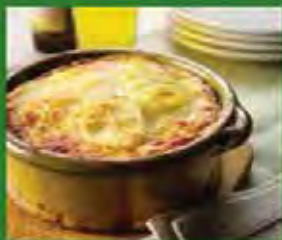
CARE AND HANDLING

Potatoes are durable, but they are not indestructible. If they are not properly cared for, they will suffer in appearance and sales.

The most common mistake is allowing too much exposure to light, which turns potatoes an unsightly shade of green.



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"Stocks not rotated daily lose freshness," Viva's Kraushaar cautions. "Light greens potatoes, so keep bulk displays covered on off-hours, and turn bags so the product is not directly exposed."

The period of time potatoes can be exposed to the light varies considerably depending on the variety of potato.

Turner has seen some very light-skinned potatoes begin to show a greenish tint after just one day of exposure to direct light. But he has also seen darker skinned potatoes, such as Russets, handle two weeks of light without showing any ill affects.

"Quick turnover should handle this problem, but you should also rotate the stock," he advises.

It is also important to avoid bruising the potatoes on display. "Don't over stack bags too high on display," Kraushaar cautions. Potatoes are a high-volume, high-revenue



product, and they drive sales of other items in the produce department. A little care in their handling will be rewarded.

"Some retailers tend to think of potatoes as a commodity and just stack them up as high as they can and forget them," USPB's Johnson says. "That makes them hard to rotate to manage greening or bruising. And it makes it hard for consumers to get at them."

And what consumers cannot get at, they cannot buy.

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Photo courtesy of Bushman's, Inc.

Reach out to consumers with big selling points

BY SUZANNE SMITHER

Variety, value and convenience make Wisconsin potatoes a wise pick for retailers and consumers, according to Wisconsin's growers and packers.

"Wisconsin offers a smorgasbord of potato choices for retailers," says Chris Anthony, vice president and co-owner of Anthony Farms, Scandinavia, WI. "We have Reds and Whites, and Wisconsin growers are moving into specialty varieties like Fingerlings and Purples. In packaging, we offer any-

thing from 1 ½-pound packages to 50-pound cartons."

Larry Alsum, president and general manager for Alsum Produce, Friesland, WI, agrees that the state's wide variety is a major selling point. "We have a full line: Russet, Red, White, Fingerling, Purple, Yellow," he notes. "We're expanding new varieties. We have five varieties of Fingerlings: Russian Banana, French Fingerling, Ruby Crescent, Purple Peruvian and Red Thumb. The newest is the Ozette variety, a yellow-skinned, yellow-fleshed potato."



Photo courtesy of Russet Potato Exchange

Mike Finnessy, sales manager, Okray Family Farms, Plover, WI, reports a “new russet variety, the Russet Freedom, that’s late-maturing and easily-stored.”

Wisconsin’s closeness to many Midwest and East Coast markets offers retailers “the advantages of convenience and freshness,” Finnessy adds.

“The nice thing about Wisconsin potatoes,” he continues, “is that we can take Russets, Whites, Reds, Yellows, Fingerlings and Blues and put them all on the same

truck because of our proximity to many markets within 500 to 600 miles — Minneapolis, Kansas City, New Orleans and the East Coast are all one or two days out. Retailers don’t have to order as much, and we can put them all on the same truck.”

Anthony agrees that proximity to retailers is a big plus for Wisconsin. “We basically are closer to the markets,” she says noting that Anthony Farms offers overnight delivery to many markets. “Our motto is ‘Let us be your potato warehouse.’”

This year’s crop looks to be of very high quality although it will not have quite the yield of last year’s crop, according to Jerry Bushman, founder of Bushman’s Inc., in Rosholt, WI. “There has been some adversity in weather conditions, but the ground has absorbed the excess water. There is good maturity and good size. There will be great, marketable potatoes this year,” he says.

INNOVATIVE IDEAS

While the Badger State ranks third in production — behind Idaho and Washington — it is taking the lead when it comes to new ideas.

“Wisconsin is being innovative, offering merchandising solutions and opportunities. We’re speaking to all potato consumers,” says Rachel Leach, marketing manager for Russet Potato Exchange, Bancroft, WI.

“Wisconsin is being innovative, offering merchandising solutions and opportunities. We’re speaking to all potato consumers.”

Rachel Leach
Russet Potato Exchange

“We as Wisconsin packers have the Biggin’s brand, basically a potato about twice the size of regular potatoes, over 10 ounces, that’s selling like hotcakes,” she explains.

The line includes the Biggin’s Single, wrapped for microwave, and the Biggin’s Complete, a flavor-wrapped potato with a topping that comes with a knife, fork and napkin. The Complete is available with Hidden Valley Ranch dressing, Sargento cheese or sour cream and butter with bacon, Leach continues.

“Retailers can market them either in produce or in a refrigerator display,” she explains. From the consumer’s point of view, “it’s a really easy way to cook a potato — they cook very thoroughly in a microwave.”

The Biggin’s line also features triplet packs and brand-new Biggin’s Grillers, wrapped in gold aluminum foil and ready for the grill, Leach adds.

Bushman’s Bushman believes the “hottest thing is to make potatoes sexy, but

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Healthy Grown is a collaborative effort of the Antigo, WI-based Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers Association (WPVGA), the University of Wisconsin, the World Wildlife Fund and other conservation groups, such as the International Crane Foundation and the Defenders of Wildlife.

The Web site relates the history and achievements of this program “conceived in the mid-’90s by a group of Wisconsin potato farmers as an experiment in large-scale, reduced-pesticide agriculture.” It touts IPM practices as offering “common ground for growers, environmentalists and health-conscious consumers.”

Tim Feit, WPVGA director of promotions and consumer education was there from the start. “Ten years ago, it was pretty groundbreaking,” he recalls, pointing out “a lot of consumers forget that farmers really care about their land. It’s been in the family for generation after generation — we really love that land. A lot of the things in the program, the farmers were already doing.”

“Farmers keep records of all the different pesticides they put on,” Feit adds. “University of Wisconsin researchers agree on standards and farmers try to meet them,” he continues. IPM, he



Photos courtesy of Russet Potato Exchange

says, means “using friendly bugs to kill bugs that harm potato plants, introducing friendly insects to help kill harmful ones so we don’t have to use pesticides.”

While organic potatoes are pesticide-free, Healthy Grown uses “just enough pesticide to ensure a high yield, higher than organic,” Feit explains. “The big benefit is that the retailer can get an environment-friendly potato at a reasonable price and charge a reasonable price to the consumer.”

“The good news is Healthy Grown sales are up,” Feit declares. “There’s a really big green movement. Healthy Grown has survived because of these farmers wanting to do the right thing. It was costing more money but we continued. Now we feel we’re turning a corner.”

pb

how do you do it? A potato has fewer calories and more value than an apple — we need to get that message out there.” The way to get out the message, explains the self-proclaimed Ph.D. — potato handler deluxe — is through packaging. “We need creative sizing, larger bakers, singles, small gourmet varieties, like Reds, Yellows and Purples. We’re packaging these varieties in 3s and 5s and we’re working on a multi-color pack. We have to make potatoes attractive to the consumer.”

Alsum of Alsum Produce is also enthusiastic about packaging for convenience. “We’re innovative in packaging,” he says, noting the advantages to the consumer of convenient microwavable spuds as well as 24-ounce packages of creamer-size potatoes that offer higher value. “We’ve led the way.”

Offering meal-planning solutions to consumers is also a big selling point, Leach notes. “The biggest thing from a point-of-sale perspective is a lot of new recipes to promote,” she says.

Alsum is proud of Wisconsin’s “whole system approach of protecting our environment and producing healthful, top-quality, sustainable potatoes.” This creates a winning proposition for retailers and consumers. “We’re just getting a small



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premium, about half a cent a pound,” he adds. “Right now, compared to conventional potatoes, ours are a definite bargain.”

PROMISING PARTNERSHIPS

Growers and packers in the Badger State point with pride to the results of their participation in cutting-edge collaborations and programs.

“I chair the Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers’ Fresh Marketing Committee,” says Anthony Farms’ Anthony. “We’ve been very involved in buying into the U.S. Potato Board [Denver, CO] marketing program for category management.

“The Best in Class program — my company and myself in particular have been involved with one of the retailers — is a way of marketing and category management for potatoes, reinventing the way potatoes are marketed in supermarkets, offering lots of different options to consumers,” she continues. Best in Class offers a lot of different choices, from bargain offerings to specialty products, also choices in assortment and display and how they’re marketed.”

Best in Class recommendations, she says, include “potato varieties or assortments promoted up to nine times a quarter, addressing the needs of various consumer

groups, also cross-promotions with other products.” In March, potatoes, corned beef and cabbage are marketed together as a St. Patrick’s Day meal solution, she explains, and in summer, steaks for the grill and bulk baking potatoes are promoted together.

“The Best in Class program is a way of marketing and category management for potatoes, reinventing the way potatoes are marketed in supermarkets, offering lots of different options to consumers.”

Chris Anthony
Anthony Farms

“We’re also looking at how we put potatoes on promotion — not necessarily deep discounting,” Anthony Farms’ Anthony

relates. “The first holiday I think of is Thanksgiving — people are going to buy potatoes at Thanksgiving. Best in Class promotes partnership between retailers and grower/shippers.”

Alsum is also satisfied with Alsum Produce’s association with Best in Class. “We’ve been a leader in the Best in Class project — we’re using it to increase our market share. We’ve had some positive results.”

Russet Potato’s Leach is excited about a new RPE licensing agreement with Disney. “On Sept. 1 we’re rolling out our Disney promotion with a lot of Disney magic. We’re going to be a part of the Disney Garden brand in partnership with Imagination Farms.” The goal of this is to tailor the market to children and families and increase consumption of vegetables by children.”

Food safety is another area where partnership brings satisfying results. “Food safety is huge for us,” Anthony says. “We’ve been involved in the OSHA food safety program since 1991, with a superior rating.”

THE “GREEN” STATE

Perhaps the greatest source of pride for these growers and packers is their participation in the Healthy Grown program, which Anthony refers to as a “value-added



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concept unique to Wisconsin." Healthy Grown potatoes, she explains, are "grown under a program that uses very environment-friendly growing practices and also has eco-restoration."

The Healthy Grown Program, now in its 11th year, was developed by the Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers Association, Antigo, WI, in partnership with the University of Wisconsin and prominent conservation groups.

"We were one of the growers that worked with the University of Wisconsin to develop standards," says Alsum.

"Our farm participates in the Healthy Grown program," Anthony says. "We feel we have that responsibility to the land and to future generations." From a marketing point of view, "Our goal would be to have

Potatoes are "grown under a green plan that's very easy on the land. It costs a little more to grow them that way, but it's the least harmful to the land."

Mike Finnessy
Okray Family Farms

this be a value-added product. It is a niche market." A big plus for retailers and consumers, she points out, is that Healthy Grown potatoes are "less expensive to the

consumer" than organics."

"We're part of the Healthy Grown project," says Leach of Russet Potato Exchange, describing Healthy Grown as "an entire ecosystem-friendly way to grow potatoes. Its time has come."

Finnessy of Okray Family Farms, another program participant, joins the chorus of praise for Healthy Grown. Potatoes are "grown under a green plan that's very easy on the land," he says. "It costs a little more to grow them that way, but it's the least harmful to the land. We still can get fairly good yields. With organic it's hard to get a good yield. We use synthetic fertilizers and we're very careful how we spoon-feed the fertilizer in. We make sure we don't over-fertilize. It requires extra testing and more man hours."

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Reader Service #100

Perfecting Pear Sales

Ripe and ready-to-eat are keys to increasing pear profits.

BY TRISHA J. WOOLDRIDGE

For a long time, pears were shipped so hard and unripe to produce departments that customers were advised to ripen them at home for up to a week before consuming them. Many stores still follow this practice, displaying immature pears that need to be ripened by consumers willing to wait to eat their fruit.

Fortunately, this does not need to be the case. Retailers and pear distributors are making strides in conditioning and ripening the fruit so that today's busy consumers can eat a pear the same day they buy it. Retailers who opt to display ready-to-eat pears are seeing a significant growth in sales.

"The latest trend is to have the fruit ready to eat," says Broc Bengard, vice president for Kelseyville-CA based Bengard Marketing. "There have been a lot of advances to have pears on the shelf that are ready to eat."

"When we schedule it so stores received the conditioned [ripened] fruit, the customers win because the fruit tastes better and we win through more repeat sales," explains Gary J. Campisi, director of quality control for Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., headquartered in Bentonville, AR. "We saw a significant rise in sales with pre-conditioning, and we continue to see an increase in the pear category."

Tracy King, director of marketing for Dovex, Wenatchee, WA, explains, "The basic dilemma in pears is consumers' desire for instant gratification. Consumers don't want to ripen them themselves. It defers the gratification. The innovation of ripening allows for a capitalization on pear sales."

"It's definitely affected sales in a positive way," agrees Loren Queen, marketing and communication manager for Domex Super-



Ripe pears drive repeat sales and help create perceived value.



Photo courtesy of USA PEARS

fresh Growers, Yakima, WA, about current conditioning techniques. "Consumers are learning, 'Hey! Pears are good.'"

PEAR RIPENING 101

Pears generally do not ripen well on the tree. Even if they do, tree ripening has a very short time-span during which very small batches of pears can be picked. This is not optimal for mass production and supply. The best way to maintain a high level of quantity and quality in pears is off-the-tree

ripening. Unripened pears are also less likely to spoil and more durable for shipping and storing. However, the chilled temperatures used for shipping and storing slow the ripening process significantly, leaving the fruit still green if it is displayed at retail stores without pre-conditioning.

Some stores keep the pears in storage and wait for them to ripen, but that can take quite some time. The practice of pre-conditioning, also known as pre-ripening, is done through temperature and exposure to ethylene, a ripening hormone. The treatment is usually adjusted for the hardness of the pear or the time since picking.

Bengard explains, "Pre-conditioning is the process where the harvest is exposed to ethylene and warmed. Then, the pears are cooled back down for shipping. When re-triggered at room temperature, it starts the process of ripening again."

He continues by illustrating how timing affects the process, "The first two to three weeks of harvest are ethylene treated, depending on the district. The fourth week, we just pick and pack. Sometimes, in the



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third week, if the pressure, or how much the pear gives to the touch comes down, we don't need to treat them."

What makes the pre-conditioning so effective with pears is biology. "Pears are a climacteric fruit, a fruit that continues to ripen once picked," explains Dennis Kihlstadius, the ripening and technical advisor for Produce Technical Services, Bemidji, MN. After picking, the starches convert to sugar; acid and sugar react to soften and, depending on the type, change the color of the pear.

"Climacteric means it's going to climax," says Kihlstadius, who also serves the Milwaukie, OR-based Pear Bureau Northwest (PBN) and the Sacramento, CA-based California Pear Advisory Board (CPAB). "It's like a bell curve. During the ripening, the pear will give off more carbon dioxide and take in ethylene. After the peak ripeness, when it's going downhill, it gives off ethylene."

Timing is important, notes Bengard Marketing's Bengard. "It's important to control how long the pears are in the warehouses

and when they are sent to the store. If pre-conditioned pears are in the warehouse for too long, they will ripen while in the warehouse rather than at the store." He suggests pears be kept in the warehouse for a very short time before sending them to the store.

Some retailers actually treat the pears themselves. Wal-Mart, for example, has a very effective conditioning program with 42 conditioning centers for their districts. Each fruit is tested with a penetrometer for firmness and conditioned accordingly.

"Fruit is an impulse purchase. It's sensory. Whenever you bring in value and put it in front of the customer, you create a good experience. You win and they win."

**— Gary Campisi
Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.**

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PRE-CONDITIONING OPPORTUNITIES

"Shelf life is different from flavor life," Kihlstadius says. "Stores want a longer shelf life, but a long shelf life has less flavor."

Less flavor means slower turnover of the product and fewer repeat sales, however. Many retailers worry about higher levels of shrink with riper pears, but stores that carry conditioned or pre-conditioned pears find quite the opposite.

"Pears sell better when ripe," says Monica Doll, produce manager, Vallerger's Market, a single-store operation in Napa, CA. "People want to eat them right now."

Maintaining the fruit display at the higher level of ripeness does require more attention by department staff. Domex's Queen says, "It's more critical to stay on top of rotating and culling. The payoff is much higher sell-through; the effort is worth it."

Bengard cautions that riper pears can be more delicate with lower pressure when

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they arrive at store shelves, so they need a gentler touch.

"Treat the fruit a little better," suggests Kihlstadius, who specifies they should not be stacked as high or as deep as non-ripened pears. "Fresher fruit should be turned over faster. As a general rule, higher sugar means a higher respiration and a lower shelf life."

"You get a little less shelf life," offers Dovex's King, "but that's a fair price to pay for rewards in more sales and sales that are worth more." A better pear experience drives repeat sales and proper ripeness also helps create more of a perceived value in

the fruit. "In a hotly competitive retail environment, retailers realize they will be rewarded with a perception of premium quality."

Dennis James, PBN director of marketing, states, "Without a question, there is a significant value perceived when ripened pears are offered. People want to organize and simplify life. Before, people would buy things and expect a lot of prep work. That's not a value anymore."

Domex's Queen adds, "Pre-conditioned pears are ready to go now, have a nice scent and add that much more value. They're pre-

The Science Of Pre-Conditioning

There is a recipe to it," says Dennis Kihlstadius, ripening and technical advisor for Produce Technical Services, Bemidji, MN, in regards to the pre-conditioning and ripening process of pears. "You can't change much."

Kihlstadius has taught a course in fruit ripening management at the University of California, Davis for the past nine years. He compares the ripening room for pre-conditioning to an oven. "A baker won't bake all of the pastries at the same temperature for the same amount of time. You shouldn't do that to fruit."

Different fruits have different ideal temperatures and capacities for ripening. Most fruit needs to be kept between 55° and 70° Fahrenheit to accept ethylene. Pears, on the other hand, require a temperature between 64° and 70° Fahrenheit, depending on the harvest, for proper ripening.

The ripening room adjusts temperature and quantity of ethylene to which the pears are exposed. Higher temperatures cause a faster respiration in fruits, so they can absorb more ethylene quicker. However, Kihlstadius points out, "If it's too high, the respiration is still high, but the absorption receptor site begins to shut down."

A high temperature alone will not ripen fruit; the fruit needs to absorb the ethylene, but adding more ethylene to the room does not mean the fruit will absorb more at a faster rate. "You never need more than 150 parts per million of ethylene in the room. On average, it should be 100 parts per million. If you double the ethylene, the fruit will not ripen faster," he explains. **pb**



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mium items when ready to eat, right now."

"Fruit is an impulse purchase," says Wal-Mart's Campisi. "It's sensory." Ripeness creates that sensory experience for the customer through scent and instant gratification. Providing that experience raises the value of pears. "Whenever you bring in value and put it in front of the customer, you create a good experience. You win and they win."

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Offering a variety of ripe and ready-to-eat pears on a consistent basis builds consumer loyalty.

proper ripening techniques at home. According to PBN's James, "There are many stores against the Anjou pear, but we give them a ripe pear to try, and it's the first time they've had it in their lives. It's like a whole new pear." When pears are properly ripened, "The flavors you get are far and away better than just letting it sit there!"

Offering samples can go a long way in

changing people's perception about pears. Domex's Queen cites the power of produce department personnel conducting demos and sampling. "It's a real key to driving sales. Customers realize the pear they're tasting is taken right off the display and is ready to eat."

Along with introducing customers to the great taste of pears, giving pears a new

image packs even more value into the fruit.

"The most successful pear merchandisers go beyond the notion of pears for pears' sake," Dovex's King explains. "They show how pears fit into an upscale lifestyle. Positioned with gourmet wine and cheese, pears are perceived to have a lot of value and aligned with a certain type of lifestyle. When people look at wine and see a higher

"The most successful pear merchandisers go beyond the notion of pears for pears' sake. They show how pears fit into an upscale lifestyle."

**— Tracy King
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Reader Service # 150

California Pears Are Branching Out

By Bob Johnson

In California pears, there is a trend toward more varieties," says Doug Hemly, president of Greene and Hemly, Courtland, CA. "The California pear industry historically has been a Bartlett pear industry. The change is due largely to declining demand for processed California pears."

Other producers and suppliers agree variety is the new name of the game in California pears. "For most of the retailers the trend is toward more varieties," says Broc Bengard, vice president of Bengard Marketing, Kelseyville, CA. "The strongest part of this trend started around two years ago, but it's been going on longer than that."

In addition to the traditional California Bartlett, retailers are now carrying Bosc, Red, Crimson and other pear varieties. "The Bartletts are still the primary ones in our time slot. But retailers seem to want an array of different pears," says Dave Elliot Jr., co-owner of David Elliot Orchards, Courtland, CA.

The demand for additional pear varieties began increasing around 10 to 12 years ago,

says Elliot. Although he grows mainly Bartletts, Elliot also offers a selection of Golden Bosc, Red Sensation and Comice varieties.

A major reason behind the trend is supermarkets needing to compete with the Wal-Marts and Costcos, which are able to offer good prices on large volumes. "The chains are trying to show they have something different," Bengard explains.

One new wrinkle in California pears is the wider availability of Asian pears grown in California. "I see an increase in the consumption of the Asian pears," says John Hein, marketing director for Crown Jewels Marketing & Distribution, Fresno, CA. "They used to be seasonal, but now they're year-round, which has increased the demand." The increasing popularity of Asian pears began six or seven years ago.

Asian pears look and handle very differently from the more familiar Bartletts. "I refer to it as an apple pear because it looks like an apple, and it's almost as durable," Hein says.

Bartlett and Bosc remain the major pear varieties, but the other varieties are finding

niche markets, according to Hemly. "The other varieties will continue to grow slowly, but I don't see any dramatic change coming. Bosc is being looked at because there are fully russeted varieties. There is also some interest in red skin varieties."

"There has been a transition on a gradual basis to new varieties," says Chris Zanobini, executive director of the California Pear Advisory Board (CPAB), Sacramento, CA.

Bosc has solidified its position as second only to Bartlett among California fresh market pear varieties. "We're looking at around 3.6 million 36-pound equivalent boxes of Bartletts this year, and a million boxes of other varieties," Zanobini estimates. Of the million boxes of other varieties, around 75 percent will be Bosc.

"You're always looking for new varieties that will extend the season with an earlier harvest," Zanobini explains. "There are some people who are trying a bunch of new varieties."

One producer already has a new red pear variety that has not yet been introduced to the marketplace.

pb



price, they see it as being worth more. To the extent of associating pears in that context, they are no longer a commodity but part of a lifestyle of higher value."

Vallerga's Doll agrees, "We cross-merchandise pears at the deli with cheese." She suggests retailers "offer recipes and ideas and have more signage with nutrition facts, where the pears are from and where they are grown."

EDUCATION AND CONSISTENCY

Color does not necessarily depict

ripeness in pears. Environment and growing conditions can affect color. Some varieties simply don't change color much as they ripen, so it is important to find accurate ways to judge ripeness.

CPAB and PBN advertise their *Check the Neck* campaign as an accurate measure of ripeness; a pear is ripe and ready-to-eat once its neck gives to slight pressure.

"Pears ripen from the inside out," notes Produce Technical Services' Kihlstedius. "If you squeeze the equator of a pear, you'll see your fingerprints in about two days. You shouldn't squeeze the middle."

There are a lot of incorrect myths when it comes to produce, particularly pears. "Pears should not be refrigerated until ripe," he advises. "Many retailers and consumers refrigerate them and that doesn't give an accurate flavor profile."

Queen suggests using POS materials to promote ripeness. "Signage should let you know there are 'Ripe Anjou pears' or 'Ripe Bartlett pears.' Let the customer know that they are ripe and ready to eat. Educating the consumer is critical," he recommends. Domex provides custom signage for stores and educational packaging with its pears. The company recently introduced the ripeSense package of four pre-conditioned pears with a sensor on the clamshell that displays the pears' ripeness.

Teaching consumers about ripeness and the benefits of ripe pears is one step. The next is to maintain consistency in the practice of offering properly ripened fruit.

"It comes down to the basics of life and consistency," notes James. "People want consistent eating quality and if fruit is ready to eat and they can eat it right away, it creates a retail sale."

Wal-Mart's Campisi agrees, "Once you get customers to try pears, then you need to maintain consistency to get them to come back."

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Colorado Produce

Benefits for buyers include freight advantages, diversity and quality.

BY SANDY LINDBLAD LEE

With steep fuel prices showing no sign of waning anytime in the near future, the natural freight advantage offered by Colorado produce continues to gain increasing attention from buyers.



David Petrocco Sr. of David Petrocco Farms



Chuck Bird of Martin Produce Co.



While Colorado's location in the middle of the western half of the United States has consistently provided a freight advantage to customers, buyers who had previously diverted their purchases to more distant growing regions are increasingly drawn to the Mile High state's offerings. However, it is diversity and quality of Colorado produce that contributes to increasing loyalty.

"The higher the fuel, the better the freight advantage to us here," notes Chuck Bird, general manager of Martin Produce Co., Greeley, CO. "Truck availability has been good this season as well." His company's northern Colorado growing and packing operations are situated 40 to 50 miles north of Denver, in one of the state's primary produce-growing regions.

Along with its freight advantages and variety, Colorado received some assistance from Mother Nature this year. Industry representatives from all production regions concur that optimum growing conditions have produced excellent quality and yields. Despite weather-related problems early in the growing season, volume has been steady since the harvest began in mid-summer — and is expected to continue through the fall.

Casting a big shadow on this widespread optimism, however, are uncertainties relating to labor availability in both the fields and warehouses for harvest and packing.

While some grower/shippers anticipate no serious shortages, others express frustration about difficulties with more labor-intensive crops.

Sakata Farms, Inc., Brighton CO, grows, packs and ships sweet corn, onions, broccoli and cabbage among its mix — produce that needs a lot of hand labor throughout the year. Bob Sakata, head of operations, says ongoing delays in attaining additional labor through the H-2A worker program while also complying with Colorado regulations that are even stiffer than federal Form I-9 requirements verifying employment eligibility have intensified the difficulties. Sakata needs about 200 seasonal workers throughout the growing season to plant, cultivate and harvest his vegetable crops — a number that does not include warehouse packing labor.

David Petrocco Sr., president of David Petrocco Farms, based in Brighton, CO, received permission to get H2A workers, but the program is only valid for this year. "We need a good guest-worker program which is not cost prohibitive, or we may have to change dramatically what we plant," he explains.

Petrocco is one of the state's most diversified lettuce and mixed green growers, multiplying his need for hand-harvesters. Petrocco, who is also an onion grower/shipper, made the decision to eliminate transplanted onions this year because of their hand-labor intensity.

He pays the equivalent of \$10 per hour to workers in the H2A program through wages, transportation and housing. "People who used to come to work here are going instead to year-round jobs with fast-food restaurants and hotels or to full-time nursery work."

Although Colorado may have a freight advantage because of its location, Petrocco believes skyrocketing fuel costs have severely impacted his business "through the price of our chemicals, waxed containers and diesel fuel, among other things."

Martin's Bird echoes the feelings about labor woes. "We have the INS, EPS, FDA, Immigration & Naturalization Service, Wage and Hour, and uncounted more to comply with. It's just a huge alphabet soup of people looking over our shoulders

Colorado Produce Diversity

One of Colorado's greatest assets — its fresh produce — is often overlooked because of all the attention shown to the state's breathtaking scenery and healthful climate. Colorado continues to offer diversity that can satisfy the cravings and needs of even the most inventive retail and foodservice buyers.

Some believe the state's high altitude, fresh air and clean soil help grow products that are even more nutritionally dense than the average federally established standards.

Onions and potatoes are two of the state's leading vegetable crops, but they are only the beginning of the offerings. Carrots, sweet corn, beans, squash, mixed greens, cabbage, broccoli and tree fruit are also harvested and shipped.

Yellow squash, zucchini and mixed leaf lettuce varieties are only a few examples of the items Ken Mosesman owner of Market Distributing in Dallas, TX, buys during the Colorado produce season every summer and fall. Market Distributing is a wholesale operation servicing wholesale and retail in the Dallas-Ft. Worth region.

Ray Keegan, an owner of American Produce LLC, in Denver, CO, appreciates Colorado produce, which helps him supply his retail and foodservice customer base. King Soopers, Safeway, Albertson's Super K-Mart and various Hispanic markets are among his key retail customers. "Colorado vegetables have more flavor, they keep their freshness longer, and the quality is great," he says.

Colorado produce suppliers are responding to more of today's hottest trends, including increased organic production.

According to Don Gallegos, agriculture program specialist, Colorado Department of Agriculture (CDA), Lakewood, CO, "Since 1989, Colorado has been one of the nation's leaders in the fast-growing agricultural organic industry. The was one of the first state agencies to develop and implement state organic certification of the farms."

Gallegos cites 2006 CDA statistics that indicate 150 certified organic farms and ranches totaling nearly 173,500 certified acres, ranking Colorado among U.S. leaders in organic produce. "Colorado's winters and

dry climate help make it ideal for organic production," he stresses.

One of the larger organic operations is Wellington, CO-based Grant Family Farms, which plants and harvests more than 2,500 acres. "We are the largest family-owned organic vegetable farm in the United States," claims co-owner Andy Grant.

"Our signature item is our Savoy spinach," he says, with leaf lettuce, romaine, broccoli, parsley, cilantro, chard, collards, other greens, and several squash varieties also on the organic availability list.

Albert's Organics, headquartered in Bridgeport, NJ, has a distribution center in Aurora, CO. "We have the largest distribution coverage of any organic produce supplier in the country," claims Frank McCarthy, vice president of marketing.

One onion grower who has tapped into the organic potential is Fagerberg Produce Co., Eaton, CO. "We are making affiliations with growers in Colorado and other regions to supply organics," according to owner Lynn Fagerberg.

With a lineup that includes several Fingerling potatoes, LaSalle, CO-based Strohauser Farms has seen huge growth in its organic specialty produce. A 400 percent increase in organic Fingerling production includes Russian Banana, Fresh Fingerling, Rose Finn Apple and Peruvian Purple varieties, owner Harry Strohauser reports.

"Strohauser Farms' organic and conventional fingerling potatoes are smaller in size, which makes them convenient, flavorful and versatile," Tanya Fell, director of marketing and retail relations explains. "Because of their size, Fingerlings bake quickly. They can also be roasted, grilled, steamed, sautéed, boiled, fried or mashed. However you prepare them, Fingerlings add outstanding flavor and color to your favorite meal."

She says new packaging with labels reflecting "the natural lifestyle of Colorado" will be released in November, adding that consumer totes with handles will be available for both organic and convention fingerlings.

Sales of organic russet potatoes have been increasing "at the rate of 13.5 percent per month," says Mike Brothers, salesman at Farm

Fresh Direct LLC, Monte Vista, CO. Last year, the company began offering organic red, yellow and purple varieties to its customers.

While the organic produce niche has been earning considerable attention, Colorado's higher-volume conventional items, including onions, potatoes, sweet corn, cabbage, and tree fruit, remain the industry's mainstays.

Colorado's dry climate yields high-quality onions and potatoes to supply the U.S. and export markets nearly year-round, thanks to in-field curing and modern storage facilities. Most of the onions are grown north and east of Denver, with some in the Arkansas Valley in the southern part of the state and on the Western Slope.

Watermelons and cantaloupes began shipments in late July. The Arkansas Valley has earned a reputation for its legendary Rocky Ford cantaloupes.

The tasty, high-quality fruit from Colorado orchards is much anticipated each summer. Grown on the Western Slope, the four leading fruit crops are apples, peaches, pears and cherries. However, early spring cold snaps and high winds had an impact on this year's tree-fruit yields.

Mark Menagh, executive director of the Boulder County Farmers Market, Boulder, CO, reports tree-fruit production has been most severely affected by hard frost in early April. He estimates Western Slope overall fruit production to be "down more than 50 percent. Peach tree production is down as much as 80 percent, pear tree production is reduced by about 70 percent, and apple yields are down 20 to 60 percent." Cherry and apricot tree production was practically nonexistent.

In spite of this year's reduced volume, sellers say universal regard will maintain the popularity of Colorado fruit. Producers and distributors agree the high altitude at which the fruit grows makes it taste better. While in recent years other regions of the country have focused on bringing back the lost flavor in stone fruit, western Colorado orchard owners claim they have always maintained a practice of not harvesting fruit before it reaches its flavor peak. **pb**

— and adding to our costs of doing business. Our two biggest burdens to bear are labor shortages and water problems."

WATER ISSUES

Water shortages caused by governmental

well shutoffs seriously affected the growing region northeast of Denver this season. Farms continued to face critical water shortfalls in 2007 because a well shutdown in May this past year by the state water engineer remains in effect. The shutdown of

450 irrigation wells impacted over 200 growers and 20,000 acres. Although the area has experienced some relief during the past two years, ongoing drought conditions have been compounded by pressure from rapidly escalating populations along Colorado's

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As Organic Produce gains increasing space in produce departments, multitudes are suddenly attempting to capture their share of this complex category's popularity.

We set the standard for product excellence long before it became fashionable. We understand Organics and the extra steps necessary to ensure the integrity of this specialized product line.

Our diligence has established us as industry leaders in growing, packing and distribution of Organic produce.

And while others are still experimenting, we already deliver perfection.



Skyline Potato Company

**Year-Round Supplier of Conventional and
 "Certified Organic" Potatoes in all popular
 Russet, Red, Fingerlings and Yellow Varieties**

719-754-3484

Fax: 719-754-2200

Skylinepotato@centurytel.net

Randy Bache Tom Perrin Bob Noffsinger Angela Aguirre

Front Range, which has diverted water to several municipalities.

Even with the water restrictions, "The vegetable crops look great at this point," notes onion grower/shipper Dennis Hoshiko, president of North Weld Produce,

Colorado

The Colorado Department of Agriculture (CDA), Lakewood, CO, created *Colorado Proud* in 1999 to promote locally grown, raised or processed products to consumers statewide, nationally and internationally. Currently, the program has more than 780 members that include growers, processors, restaurants, retailers and associations.

This year, a contest for shoppers to win free groceries at Pleasanton, CA-based Safeway, an expanded TV advertising campaign and a Colorado pavilion at the Newark, DE-based Produce Marketing Association (PMA) Fresh Summit are among the *Colorado Proud* activities, which are helping to gain new attention for Colorado produce.

Safeway is sponsoring an online contest that includes a grand prize of free groceries for a year, according to Wendy Lee White, CDA marketing specialist.

Twelve \$100 Safeway gift cards are being awarded, starting in July and continuing through October, with the grand prizewinner receiving a year's supply of groceries at Safeway (valued at \$5200).

In addition to the contest, consumers can find recipes, produce picking tips, a crop calendar and a searchable Colorado products directory online. Last year's contest resulted in 115,055 total entries.

"We are excited to partner with Safeway to promote local products," said John R. Stulp, CDA commissioner. "Everyone can help support Colorado agriculture throughout the year by buying products with the *Colorado Proud* logo and the *Better for you. Better for Colorado.* tag line."

Colorado Proud is encouraging people to buy local products through a summer and fall television advertising campaign on the state's most popular TV stations. "We've been running our television ads on Channel 11 in Grand Junction in addition to Channel 9 in Denver," White reports.

Several Colorado grower/shippers have played the starring role in various *Colorado Proud* commercials. Filming was done on site at the fields and packing facilities of participating grower/shippers.

"In 2006, our *Colorado Proud* television ad, featuring photographs from renowned photographer John Fielder, proved to be so

based in Greeley, CO. "We will be able to provide our customers with good volume of great quality."

"In spite of the fact that we are still in the worst drought in recorded history, the vegetable crops remain the top priority,"

Proud

highly successful that we have acquired 99 new members and have increased consumer awareness of the program statewide," White continues.

The *Colorado Proud* television ad featuring Fielder's photography received the 2006 Colorado Broadcaster's Association Award for Excellence for Best Commercial Advertising Spot for an Advertiser, Any Length.

According to the 2006 data from Channel 9 television in Denver, the 2006 series resulted in 718 ads and reached 97.3 percent of households an average of 24.9 times and 96.6 of adults aged 25-54 an average of 12.3 times. White says the data also reveals the ad gained 34 million household impressions.

Farmers, ranchers, processors, retailers and restaurants that are members of Colorado Proud and wish to participate have a variety of additional advertising packages available to them.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Specialty Crops Grant Program awarded the CDA Markets Division more than \$40,000 to develop and create a Colorado pavilion for PMA's Fresh Summit. While several Colorado producers and distributors have plans to be a part of the 2007 show in Houston, TX, the official unveiling of the full-scale pavilion is planned for the 2008 PMA Fresh Summit in Orlando, FL.

Highlighting some of the strongest benefits of the Colorado Pavilion, Tim Larsen, CDA senior international marketing specialist, notes, "The Colorado pavilion will be a large exhibition area where the Colorado produce industry can share common spaces at trade shows. We will be able to promote Colorado's produce on the U.S. level as well as internationally."

Starting with the 2008 PMA convention, space for both association and individual company booths within the Colorado pavilion will provide wholesale, retail and food-service buyers a better and more comprehensive view of what the Colorado produce industry offers.

A committee of Colorado produce associations and individual produce growers, working in cooperation with the CDA Markets Division, will coordinate the final details for the Colorado pavilion.

pb

Hoshiko explains. The well shutoffs most seriously impacted grains and other crops planted primarily for rotation purposes.

While producer augmentation plans to address future irrigation needs are underway, other alternatives are being explored.

Fagerberg Produce Co., Eaton, CO, has been evaluating the benefits of drip irrigation for several years. Lynn Fagerberg, president, has converted over 750 acres of his farming operations to drip, which averages about 40 percent less water use than the traditional, row irrigation method. Crop yields show at least a 20 percent increase with

drip, he adds, and his plans call for gradual conversion of additional acreage to drip.

Petrocco Farms is also utilizing drip irrigation on an expanding basis.

QUALITY REMAINS FIRST PRIORITY

Despite these mounting adversities, most Colorado shippers stress that quality remains their No. 1 priority.

A standout among these is North Weld Produce, a shipper that maintains what some now consider an old-fashioned harvest method. Unlike virtually all direct-seeded



Fagerberg
PRODUCE COMPANY

Drawing from our **Family Roots**
as one of the **Northern**
Colorado's earliest
Homesteaders in 1882,
through four generations...

We remain at the core of the onion industry.

While upholding our strong grower-shipper foundation...

Now one of the
NATION'S LEADING ONION DISTRIBUTORS!

Consumer Packs Our Specialty

Most diverse line of precision-packaged product
current technology can produce.

Featuring "Colorado Sweet" Onions

Call Lynn Fagerberg, Alan Kinoshita
or Ryan Fagerberg

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www.fagerbergproduce.com

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**SHIPPING:
Leaf Lettuce
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Onions
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Brighton, CO 80601**

Reader Service # 77



Lynn Fagerberg of Fagerberg Produce Co. with his granddaughter Remi

onion growers, the company still harvests the majority of its onion crop by hand. Hoshiko maintains that labor availability is not a problem. According to Hoshiko, "Our clientele appreciates the higher quality and longer shelf life that hand-harvested onions produce, and we are pleased to be able to provide jobs for more people by doing so." A loyal labor pool continues to return annually to his farms, so his workforce is maintained, he explains.

"The more quality-conscious retailers



Dean and Jean Hoshiko of North Weld Produce Inc.

will more than recover their money for our premium label — through less shrink and a higher sales volume," Hoshiko notes, adding that completed market tests by two retail chains proved increased sales from his Blue Tag label.

Hoshiko attributes his company's ability to stay in business in an evolving, competitive marketplace to "a long-time, dedicated staff, loyal customers," and a higher power. "We plant and we nurture, but God gives the growth."

pb

MARTIN PRODUCE, INC.

Our Tradition Continues...

Leader through History —

For 68 years, we've established and maintained the standards for excellence as one of Colorado's first onion and potato packer-shippers.

Leader into the Future —

Our attention to detail utilizes the most updated research and technology available through every step in our production, packing, and distribution process.

Onion Sales handled by • MARTIN PRODUCE INC.
Greeley, CO

970-352-6712 • Transportation: 970-352-7405
Dorothy Martin • Dewey Zabka • Chuck Bird

Now Shipping: Colorado Yellow, White and Red Onions
Featuring "Colorado Sweet" Onions

Also Shipping:

Colorado Red, Russet, and Yukon Gold Potatoes

Potato Sales handled by • CANON POTATO CO.
Center, CO.

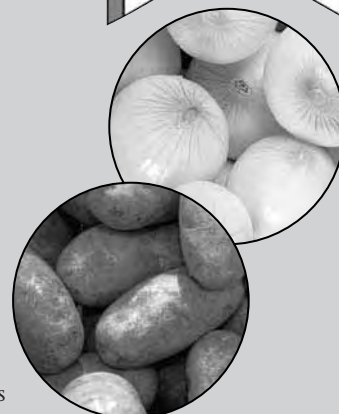
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"Martin's Leader" • "Hoyle's Best" • "Utility Elk" brands

OUR FAMOUS
LABEL
SAYS IT ALL !!!



Since 1939



Reader Service # 145

Including
Special Floral Section
Starting on page 167



Fresh Summit International Convention & Exposition

October 12 - 15, 2007
George R. Brown Convention Center
Houston, Texas USA



producebusiness
MARKETING • MERCHANDISING • MANAGEMENT • EDUCATION

AISLE *by* AISLE

Booth



Review

SPECIAL SECTION SPONSORED BY:



CALIFORNIA TABLE
GRAPE COMMISSION



DOLE FOOD
COMPANY



HOLLANDIA
PRODUCE



We Produce
LGS
SPECIALTY SALES



NEW YORK STATE
DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE AND MARKETS



SUNRISE
GROWERS, INC.



THERMAL
TECHNOLOGIES, INC.



Sunrise
Growers

Booth #
4556

STRAWBERRIES
are really big right now.



AISLE 001

Booth #5

NNZ, INC.

Lawrenceville, GA
NNZ carries a full line of biodegradable, compostable, sustainable, earth-friendly products. Our trays come in PLA, palm fiber, Sugarcane, tapioca starch and bamboo. NNZ offers compostable and oxo-degradable films in shrink, cling — and flow-wrap formats.



Booth #9

SWEET ONION TRADING COMPANY

Palm Bay, FL
Specializing in quality sweet onions from around the world, we oversee our supplies from seed to store, offering year-round supplies of fresh Granex-seed sweet onions from Florida, Georgia, California, Washington, Mexico, Ecuador, Guatemala, Chile and Peru, packed to order in bulk, cartons and high-graphic mesh bags

Booth #16

IMG CITRUS, INC.

Vero Beach, FL
IMG Citrus is a fully integrated Florida citrus company that offers one-stop shopping for fresh grapefruit, oranges and tangerines. Our mission is "to delight consumers worldwide with citrus-grown responsibility."



Booth #19

RFBII COMPUTER SERVICES

Grand Rapids, MI
RFBII provides computer services to produce industry clients including network support, custom software, and Internet and mobile integration of your data. We help you make the best use of your current system and strategically plan for your IT system's future.



Booth #26

MIATECH, INC.

Clackamas, OR
Miatech will showcase our misting products, cold-room humidification tools and pathogen and ethylene control systems. Our equipment helps maintain freshness and quality in fruits, vegetables and flowers. They also help control product weight loss and shrink.



Booth #133

IMAGINATION FARMS

Indianapolis, IN
With more than 250 SKUs, our Disney Garden brand is finding innovative ways to make eating fruits and vegetables fun. Featuring the No. 1 family brand in the United States, Imagination Farms will showcase a broad range of categories including Foodles, Fresh Veggies & Sauce, and Pixie Sweet corn.



Booth #233

OSOSWEET ONIONS

Waterford, MI
OsoSweet is celebrating its 20th season bringing the finest, most consistent winter sweet onions to the United States. Stop by and celebrate with us at our colorful new booth.



Booth #344

PRIMA BELLA PRODUCE, INC.

Tracy, CA
Prima Bella ships fresh GloriAnn brand super sweet corn year-round from the heart of California's Central Valley. White, yellow and bi-color corn is available with or without husks, in cut cobs or cobettes, and in a variety of food-service, club store and retail packs.



Booth #423

ONEONTA STARR RANCH GROWERS

Wenatchee, WA
Oneonta Starr Ranch presents the legendary reputation of the fragrant pear. For more 1,300 years, these extraordinary pears have been cultivated west of the Gobi Desert near the Tian Shan Mountains in China. The flesh is crisp and juicy with a delicate fragrance.



Booth #459

NATIONAL RAISIN CO.

Bronx, NY.
We are introducing the Disney Dried Fruit line, which includes 12/6/1.25-ounce Raisins, Raisin/Cranberry Mix and Tropical Fruit Mix, 12/14/5-ounce Raisin Mini, 12/5-ounce Fruit & Nut Mix Pouch and 12/5-ounce. Apple-Cranberry Mix Pouch.



Booth #543

A.J. TRUCCO, INC.

Bronx, NY.
Importers of fine produce from around the world, A.J. Trucco specializes in fresh Italian chestnuts, kiwifruit, grapes, fresh and dried figs, roasted hazelnuts, garlic, dried fruits and nuts. This year, we're introducing Trucco Organic, a full-line of USDA-certified organic produce to meet the growing demand for quality organic products.



Booth #609

DULCINEA FARMS, LLC

Ladera Ranch, CA
At Dulcinea Farms, nothing is more important than meeting consumers' needs with the best tasting produce available in any season. Stop by our booth to learn about our exciting new products and marketing support that will help continue to grow the category.



Booth #621

HAMPTON FARMS

Seyern, NC
Hampton Farms is your ultimate destination for peanuts. We are a vertically integrated, quality-driven organization and the nation's premier shipper of in-shell, shelled and processed peanuts. We recently acquired Olde Tyme Foods and are now the exclusive source for Peanut Butter Mills and in-store, fresh-ground peanut butter programs.



Booth #633

SOUTHERN SPECIALTIES, INC.

Pompano Beach, FL
Southern Specialties is the leading grower/shipper/processor of specialty produce. We offer Southern Selects, a value-added line of quality-assured produce and Paradise, our brand of tropical produce. We grow the highest quality asparagus, peas, French beans, papayas, mangoes and more.



Booth #709

MOONEY FARMS

Chico, CA
Hand-selected and sun-dried to perfection, our sun-dried tomatoes are packed under the Bella Sun Luci and Summer's Choice labels. Available in halves and julienne cuts, this new product is packaged in a convenient stay-fresh zippered 3.5-ounce bonus pack. Redesigned bag highlights California quality.



Booth #733

COPEXEU ASOCIACIÓN CIVIL

Buenos Aires, Argentina
Come to our booth for your off-season produce business by meeting Argentine growers and exporters of fresh pears, apples, blueberries and cherries.



Booth #742

PRODUCE FOR KIDS

Reidsville, GA
PFK, a promotional campaign for produce departments, aims to educate kids and parents about healthful eating. PFK also raises funds for local Children's Miracle Network hospitals in our retailer markets and through PBS Kids.



Booth #747

SUNDIA CORPORATION

Oakland, CA
Sundia is featuring True Fruit, an attractive and delicious line of fresh fruit cups and the company's line of watermelon juices — both of which are proving popular with consumers for their refreshing taste and vitamins for a healthful lifestyle.



Booth #760

CARGO DATA CORP.

Ventura, CA
Visit our booth for a demonstration of our new wireless RF recorder. The device offers full data in the palm of your hand before moving a pallet at the dock.



Booth #807

PURITY ORGANIC

San Francisco, CA
Pacific Organic Produce/Purity.Organic is an international fruit and juice company dedicated to improving the bottom line for organic growers and promoting sustainable agriculture. Our distinctive brand allows produce managers to create striking visual displays featuring the fruit and juice together.



Booth #833

RED ZOO

Ruthven, ON

Our booth is the place to be if flavor is important to you. We will showcase "sweet and robust" Amorosa baby cocktail tomatoes, "old-world flavor meets new-world convenience" GrapeRoma snack-sized tomatoes and "crunchie" BaBee seedless cucumbers.



AISLE 900

Booth #942

FOWLER FARMS

Wolcott, NY

We invite you to stop by our booth to meet our sales team. We'll have a number of apple varieties to see and taste as well as our fresh-pressed apple cider made from a blend of seven varieties. Check out our new half bin made for easy added sales.



Booth #954

GILLS ONIONS, LLC

Oxnard, CA

Stop by our booth and see our 10-ounce diced yellow organic pack. This product is available year-round and is certified organic. Gills Onions will be showcasing our retail packs of sliced and diced red and yellow onions, as well as a full array of foodservice packs.



AISLE 1000

Booth #1001

CARLSON AIRFLO MERCHANDISING SYSTEMS

Brooklyn Park, MN

Supermarkets nationwide are enjoying the benefits of our new Peg Hook System. They can now utilize vacant space underneath the shelf to merchandise herbs with a peg hook bar mounted directly to the shelf. Coupled with P.O.D.S and curved shelving, this system creates a profit-generating merchandising display.



Booth #1133

APIO, INC.

Guadalupe, CA

Founded in 1979, Apio markets a full line of fresh-cut meal solutions under the Eat-Smart label. To extend shelf life and preserve freshness naturally, Apio utilizes its exclusive Breathway technology, which provides an optimal atmosphere within the package.

AISLE 1100

Booth #1223

BROOKS TROPICALS, INC.

Homestead, FL

Visit us under the grass huts. The largest importer of papayas into North America, Brooks harvests 70 percent of everything it sells: Caribbean Red and Caribbean Sunrise papayas, SlimCado avocados, Starfruit, Persian limes and many other premium tropical fruits and vegetables from southern Florida and the Caribbean.



Booth #1233

NEWSTAR FRESH FOODS, LLC

Salinas, CA

NewStar's new Iceless Chopped Green Onions are made from premium iceless green onions, double-washed and uniformly cut to ensure consistent sizing and color. They are available in 8-ounce and 1-pound, regular and jumbo sizing, with both mixed-green and all-green selections.



AISLE 1300

Booth #1309

COLORADO POTATO ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE

Monte Vista, CO

Colorado potatoes are grown at an altitude of 7,600 feet with plenty of sunshine, cool air and rich soil that gives them their bright color, unique flavor and, in some cases, superior nutritional properties. From our popular Russets to the new Purple Majesty, you will find many favorites among our more than 100 varieties.



Booth #1317



VLAM

Brussels, Belgium

VLAM promotes Flemish agricultural products. Only the highest quality is eligible to bear the labels Flandria and the Green Arch. A growing number of customers care deeply about their health and the environment, so almost every grower uses the "integrated" or "environmentally aware" methods of cultivation with severe specifications.

Booth #1333

WELL-PICT BERRIES

Watsonville, CA

We offer a complete berry program. Our premium proprietary strawberries are available year-round, proprietary raspberries mid-April through November. Blackberries and blueberries ship during peak spring and summer months. We also offer proprietary organic strawberries and raspberries.



Booths #1345 and #1433

MODERN MUSHROOM FARMS, INC.

Avondale, PA

We offer a new line of stuffed portabella mushrooms, including Feta Cheese and Southwest Cheese flavors in two sizes. We also carry a full-line of whole and sliced mushrooms in whites, portabellas, criminis and other specialty mushrooms.



AISLE 1400

Booth #1417

SPICE WORLD, INC.

Orlando, FL

Spice World has been in the garlic business and served American supermarkets for 59 years. To better serve our customers, we are certified growers, processors and shippers. Spice World is the No. 1 jar garlic in America's supermarkets today, and we are proud to display our organic line.

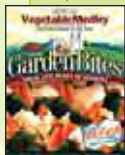


Booth #1445

VERDELLI FARMS, INC.

Harrisburg, PA

Verdelli introduces Garden Bites, a new line of 10 varieties of steam pressure-cooked vegetables with VitaSeal technology, which uses both steam and pressure to cook vegetables, guaranteeing safer preparation and more accurate cook times. Stop by and check them out.



Booth #1464

BOTANICAL INTERESTS, INC.

Broomfield, CO

We provide retail seed-packet programs with guaranteed sales, free display racks and beautifully designed packets. We are a full-line seed-packet company and offer a complete certified organic seed-packet line. Each packet has beautiful watercolor artwork plus a mini-encyclopedia printed on the inside.

AISLE 1500

Booth #1552

HONEYBEAR TREE FRUIT COMPANY

Elgin, MN

Honeybear is a leader in grower-based supply programs for retail partners who feature high-quality fruit year-round. It is recognized as the No. 1 brand of Honeycrisp apples. We offer a full line of domestic and imported apples, pears and other tree fruits.



AISLE 1600

Booth #1601

ALMOND BOARD OF CALIFORNIA

Modesto, CA

ABC research has shown California almonds have the power to deliver both nutrition and taste. Stop by our booth for usage ideas, marketing and nutrition research, and delicious almond samples. Established in 1950, ABC's charge is to promote the best quality almonds, California's largest tree crop.

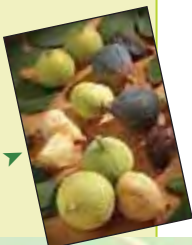


Booth #1601

CALIFORNIA FIG ADVISORY BOARD

Fresno, CA

Want to taste something sweet, savory and delectable? Are you intrigued? Stop by our booth for a taste.



Booth #1601

CALIFORNIA TABLE GRAPE COMMISSION

Fresno, CA

The California Table Grape Commission promotes fresh California grapes in the United States and more than 50 countries. Our domestic and international marketing programs provide retailers and foodservice operations with customized promotions, advertising, category management, POS and training information.

SEE AD ON PAGE 155





Fresh, healthy California grapes ... so vibrant and cool you gotta wear shades. Guarantee yourself a bright future by stocking your store with tasty California grapes. With 90% of grape-loving kids and adults preferring California grapes over imports, you'll heart California grapes for making your customers happy and your store more profitable.

Vibrant, sweet, great tasting. California grapes are perfectly dreamy.

For more information on high-quality, highly profitable California table grapes, contact Cindy Plummer with the California Table Grape Commission at 559-447-8350 or www.freshcaliforniagrapes.com.

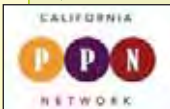




Booth #1601

CALIFORNIA TREE FRUIT AGREEMENT

Reedley, CA
The California PPN Network is the resource center for everything peach, plum and nectarine provided by the California Tree Fruit Agreement. The PPN Network delivers information, marketing expertise and consumer demand-building activity to expand opportunities of California PPN growers.



Booth #1617

CALIFORNIA AVOCADO COMMISSION

Irvine, CA
Experience the power of the programs, materials and people that support your avocado category growth. The California Avocado Commission booth showcases the latest best practices research demonstrating the power and profit of successful merchandising.



Booth #1633

SEALD SWEET INTERNATIONAL

Vero Beach, FL
With more than 98 years experience in growing, packing and marketing fruit from Florida, Texas, California and growing regions around the world, Seald Sweet International is the global source for quality year-round citrus.



Booth #1641

LGS SPECIALTY SALES

Bronx, NY
Sweet, easy-to-peel Darling Clementines are the most loved and looked for brand of Clementines in the United States. They are available virtually year-round in five cool kinds of packaging: Dora the Explorer, SpongeBob SquarePants, Blues Clues, Backyardigans and our traditional "orange and blue." Retailers call them the "crown jewels" of the citrus category.



SEE AD ON PAGE 170

aisle 1700

Booth #1701

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Tallahassee, FL
Visit B&W Quality Growers, Blue Lake Citrus/Noble Juices, Florida Strawberry Growers Association, Florida Tomato Committee, Florida Watermelon Association, Fresh King, Kerry's, Pioneer Growers Cooperative, S.M. Jones & Co., Inc. Fresh from Florida Chef Justin is at the pavilion this year.



Booth #1701

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF CITRUS

Lakeland, FL
FDOC provides turnkey programs to help grow breakfast day-parts. Our programs are designed to boost restaurant revenue, increase check averages and tips, and provide customers with the nutritious benefits of Florida orange juice.



Booth #1717

HURST'S BERRY FARM, INC.

Sheridan, OR
We have the finest specialty berries from blueberries, blackberries and raspberries to specialty berries, such as currants, gooseberries, and our popular baby kiwi. Hurst's offers high-quality produce year-round. Drop by and see us.



Booth #1723

BOSKOVICH FARMS, INC.

Oxnard, CA
Our reputation is built on quality, integrity and top quality produce. We continue to serve the retail, wholesale and foodservice industries with the finest mixed vegetables, strawberries and fresh-cut produce available. Stop by to see our new lineup of organic vegetables and fresh sliced apple products.



Booth #1733

SUN-MAID GROWERS OF CALIFORNIA

Pleasanton, CA
We offer a full line of raisins, apricots, pitted plums, dates, tropicals and other fruit products under the Sun-Maid brand. We offer a wide variety of prepacked displays that save labor and encourage incremental retail sales. Backed by the most extensive advertising and consumer promotion program in the industry.



Booth #1743

CONWED GLOBAL NETTING SOLUTIONS

Minneapolis, MN
Introducing EcoSeries Packaging, Vexar header bags made with materials certified to the AS D6400 compostability standard. A unique combination of affordable pricing and superior performance, Vexar packaging is an environmentally friendly option for marketers, retailers, growers, packers and consumers.



Booth #1801

BASKET EASE

Prior Lake, MN
Basket Ease's Easy Does It Fruit Basket program involves a simple four-step assembly process that uses containers designed to quickly make beautiful fruit baskets. Our patented scalloped design containers are available in wicker, plastic and the new PLA plastic. We carry a complete line of all the supplies you need.



aisle 1800

Booth #1823

AG-PAK, INC.

Gasport, NY
Ag-Pak supplies industry-leading produce-packaging equipment and provides exceptional after-market support. We offer weighing, bagging, optical sorting, washing and polishing equipment from the world's best manufacturers. Stop by to see a complete line of weighing and bagging systems, plus the revolutionary NEWTEC Celox RV12 optical potato grader.



Booth #1855

MANTROSE-HAEUSER COMPANY, INC.

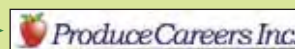
Westport, CT
Our NatureSeal continues to pioneer the fresh-cut produce industry with innovative formulations. It protects fresh-cut fruit and vegetables with precise blends of vitamins and minerals that effectively inhibit oxidation while maintaining the natural taste and texture for up to 21 days.



Booth #1861

PRODUCE CAREERS, INC.

Arroyo Grande, CA
Produce Careers is one of the produce and food industry's premier contingency search companies, filling jobs with top talent. There are no up-front fees or retainers. We average 60 percent of job search fulfillment with 75 percent of the candidates being non-job seekers.



aisle 1900

Booth #1901

VIDALIA ONION COMMITTEE

Vidalia, GA
Taste the original sweet onion! Chef Jon Ashton grills up Sweet Vidalia Sliders, so you can personally experience that unique Vidalia flavor. Booth staff is on standby to share success stories from Vidalia's 2007 Thrill Your Grill campaign — a national brand awareness blitz designed to boost in-store sales.



Booth #1913

NATURALLY FRESH, INC.

Atlanta, GA
With 26 branches across the nation, Naturally Fresh is the manufacturer of Naturally Fresh dressings, dips and sauces and Jackaroo meat sauce. Look for Naturally Fresh products in your favorite supermarket or local restaurants.



Booth #1955

HASS AVOCADO BOARD

Irvine, CA
HAB is your central source for avocado marketing intelligence. Stop by and test drive avoHQ, the Intranet dedicated to growing the Hass avocado business through shipment/sales data, research, advertising, promotional opportunities and more. Taste some delicious recipes and check out the latest in intelligent promotions.



Booth #1960

PAKSENSE

Boise, ID
Our TXi label monitors temperature and time of perishable items through distribution. Onboard lights indicate if temperature excursions have occurred and data collected by the label can be downloaded and graphed. PakSense labels provide insight into what happens to products during distribution, promoting better food quality and safety decisions.



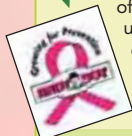


AISLE 2000

Booth #2033

D'ARRIGO BROTHERS CO. OF CALIFORNIA

Salinas, CA
D'Arrigo Brothers, a family-owned company that has brought you the highest-quality produce available for more than 84 years, introduces Romaine Baby SweetHearts. They are the tastiest and sweetest part of the heart and are 100 percent useable. Come see us to check out the newest addition to the romaine heart family.



Booth #2125

WAYMOUTH FARMS, INC.

Minneapolis, MN
Waymouth Farms, maker of Good Sense Snacks, provides innovative, quality snack foods. The most recent additions include a line of organic sesame sticks, featuring oat bran, quinoa and flaxseed, plus a new, 100 percent all-natural kids line featuring dried fruit and trail mixes in single-serve portions.



Booth #2221

TORREY FARMS, INC.

Elba, NY
We are a family-owned farming operation in its 12 generation of tilling soil. Our commodities include green, red and Savoy cabbage; cucumbers; summer and winter squash; green beans; red and yellow onions; red, white and Yukon potatoes; and pumpkins. We are integrated from growing to packing, marketing and transportation.



Booth #2053

REDLINE SOLUTIONS

Santa Clara, CA
RedLineMobile provides real-time interface for product movements, picking/staging and shipments for Famous v.6x. RedLineHarvestPro is a mobile harvest tracking system that utilizes RFID and GPS to identify commodity, source and container while tracking and monitoring the harvest process.



Booth #2201

CHILEAN AVOCADO IMPORTERS ASSOCIATION

Aptos, CA
Leaders in safe agricultural practices, Chilean Hass avocado growers use state-of-the-art growing, harvesting, grading and transportation. Because of its natural boundaries, Chile offers both conventional and organic avocados from August through February. Stop by and sample the "simply sensational" avocado with Hass avocados from Chile.

Booth #2103

NOVAZONE, INC.

Livermore, CA
Novazone, an ozone-based clean food and water disinfectant supplier, offers a cold-storage ozone solution for fresh produce in regular and controlled atmospheres. Our solution kills mold in the air and on exposed surfaces, shuts down the sporulation process and consumes ethylene. Extend product life and decrease decay losses naturally.



Booth #2202

CHRISTOPHER RANCH, LLC

Gilroy, CA
Family-owned agribusiness Christopher Ranch, LLC, offers California-grown garlic in bulk, jarred, peeled, roasted, specialties and organics. We are the largest fresh garlic grower/packer/shipper in the United States. Visit our booth to see all of our products.



Booth #2247

PEI POTATO BOARD

Charlottetown, PEI
From the rich red soil of Prince Edward Island, Canada, potatoes are our specialty. Our varieties include White, Red, Yellow, Russet and organic potatoes. With the taste of distinction and the assurance of quality, we ship throughout North America and to more than 30 countries worldwide.



Booths #2117

MISSION PRODUCE, INC.

Oxnard, CA
Mission Produce, Inc. offers an asparagus program that is year-round with sourcing from Peru, Mexico and California.



Booth #2221

NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND MARKETS

Albany, NY
Come visit the New York state pavilion at booths #2221 and #5044 to see and sample outstanding fresh produce from the state of New York. You will have the opportunity to meet with some of the finest growers and marketers in the country and discuss your fresh produce needs. Produce grown in New York, *The Pride of New York*.



SEE AD ON PAGE 163

AISLE 2300

Booth #2301

THE OPPENHEIMER GROUP

Vancouver, BC
A solutions-driven, integrated marketer of fresh produce since 1858, we pioneer new fresh produce varieties, nurture direct connections between the world's leading growers and North American retailers, cultivate sophisticated delivery networks and set standards for food safety and quality.



Booth #2352

PRODUCE MAGIC SOFTWARE

Escondido, CA
Inventory/accounting software for growers, farm management, packers/repackers, processors, shippers, brokers, importers/exporters as well as the floral, organics, fresh-cut, consignment, distribution center and iTrade sectors. We provide user-defined menus, interfaces to Excel, QuickBooks and other accounting packages.



Booth #2419

C. H. ROBINSON WORLDWIDE, INC.

Eden Prairie, MN
We are one of the world's largest providers of supply-chain solutions and transportation services. We have 100-plus years of experience in the produce industry, providing high-quality sourcing and logistics solutions for the best brands in the business, including Welch's, Mott's, Tropicana, Bambino and our own brand, Fresh1.



Booth #2443

STEMILT GROWERS, INC.

Wenatchee, WA
AppleSweets are sliced, flavored and packaged with perfection. Using our Precision Apple Slicing System (PASS), each apple is cut with the accuracy of a robotic surgical knife. PASS prevents excess damage to the apple's cell structure, leading to longer product shelf life. Patented, all-natural flavors add nutritious pizzazz.



Booth #2452

ETHYLENE CONTROL, INC.

Selma, CA
For more than 19 years, Ethylene Control has improved product shelf life for the floral and produce industries. Our 10-pack of 28-gram sachets works great in reach-ins. Our filter will protect your walk-in for six months for less than \$50.



Booth #2453

BASF CORPORATION

Research Triangle Park, NC
The BASF agricultural products division is a leader in crop protection and is committed to the fresh produce industry, providing fruit, vegetable and nut growers with fungicides, insecticides and herbicides along with other innovative products and solutions.



Booth #2457

WAVERLY PLASTICS

Waverly, IA
Waverly Plastics will introduce Tug & Tote produce bags, the full line of biodegradable bags that are the Clean Way to Bag, and the Green Way to Bag.



Booth #2501

CIRULI BROTHERS, LLC

Rio Rico, AZ

For years, Ciruli Brothers has served as the exclusive distributor of the Champagne mango. Now, we also distribute Leyson eggplant and hothouse colored bell peppers, Campa specialty eggplant and a wide variety of the finest quality produce. Please stop by and visit us.



Booth #2511

THERMAL TECHNOLOGIES, INC.

Blythewood, SC

Thermal Tech is exhibiting the latest innovations in ripening-room technology including its industry-leading TarPless design. Stop by to discuss solutions to your ripening needs with the company that has installed more ripening rooms for more top retailers, banana growers and avocado processors than all the other companies combined.

SEE AD ON PAGE 169



Booth #2556

HORTRESEARCH

Auckland, New Zealand

We are a New Zealand fruit science company specializing in all aspects of fruit breeding, production, post-harvest management, sustainable crop systems, and food and health research. HortResearch is the name behind the development of Zespri Gold kiwifruit, Jazz brand apples and the first intelligent fruit labeling system, ripeSenseT.



Booth #2557

STERILOX FOOD SAFETY

Malvern, PA

The Sterilox System 2200 is the next generation of Sterilox Food Safety equipment. The 2200 generates a food sanitizing solution that kills harmful pathogens and spoilage organisms on contact to improve the freshness of produce and prevent cross contamination when

crisping. It keeps your produce safer, fresher, longer.



Booth #2625

NEW YORK APPLE ASSOCIATION

Fishers, NY

New York's 2007-08 apple crop will have slightly above-average volume and exceed recent crops for flavor and condition. Leading New York favorites are McIntosh, Empire, Gala, Honeycrisp, Cortland, Crispin and Macoun. Harvest began in August and will finish by November. Stop by and sample a fresh New York apple and appletini!



Booth #2633

DEL MONTE FRESH PRODUCE COMPANY

Coral Gables, FL

Visit the Del Monte Fresh Produce booth to discover our latest innovative fresh and fresh-cut healthful lifestyle solution products for your produce department. Learn about our latest marketing support programs and our new exciting promotions that will drive consumers to your aisles and produce higher ring at checkout.



Booth #2653

BORTON & SONS, INC.

Yakima, WA

A grower/shipper of quality apples, pears and cherries, Borton continues to introduce new and innovative marketing programs to drive retail sales. Our NASCAR and Nickelodeon programs continue building momentum. We also offer our new Apple Tree label. Stop by and check out the multiple marketing programs and packaging options.



Booth #2659

KOPPERT CRESS USA

Lake Success, NY

Introducing a new aromatic herb, Tahoon Cress. Originating from the young sprouts of a 50-foot Himalayan tree, Tahoon Cress is a combination of earthy forest flavors that make you feel you're walking in the forest after it rains. Try Tahoon Cress and taste mushrooms, garlic and walnuts, along with a smoky aftertaste.



Booth #2663

MARKET FRESH PRODUCE, LLC

Nixa, MO

Market Fresh is part of a network of grower partners united to create Best-in-Class flexible procurement and supply chain management. We have a comprehensive understanding of retail and believe in providing our clients with the most progressive marketing programs in North America.



Booth #2744

SILVER CREEK SOFTWARE

Boise, ID

Visual Produce, an accounting program targeted to the fresh produce industry, offers unique capabilities for produce wholesalers, distributors, packers, brokers and grower settlements, including customer menus, contract pricing, lot control, route accounting, Visual Internet, landed cost and much more.



Booth #2762

WILKINSON INDUSTRIES, INC.

Fort Calhoun, NE

Wilkinson introduces new easy-sal entrée packaging — FreshServe round and rectangular bowls and lids offering supermarkets, processors and casual dining restaurants more convenient choices for take-out. Several sizes and a snap to open and close make them perfect for salads, to-go entrées, fresh-cut produce, desserts and more.



Booth #2833

IDAHO POTATO COMMISSION

Eagle, ID

The Idaho Potato Commission welcomes y'all to Texas! Please come and visit our booth to see some real Texas hospitality. While here, try on your very own cowboy hat, get a quick roping lesson from a real cowboy, and have your picture taken riding Spud, our very own Texas bull.



Booth #2942

ALLIANCE RUBBER COMPANY

Hot Springs, AR

You take pride in the freshness of your product. So do we. Our rubber bands are made fresh daily in the United States to meet your packaging needs. We offer custom-imprinted bands designed to brand and promote your produce or stock PLU bands. ProTape combines rubber-band attributes with bar-coding capability.



Booth #2946

MISSISSIPPI SWEET POTATO COUNCIL

Mississippi State, MS

The Mississippi Sweet Potato Council invites you to stop by and see why people are asking for our sweet potatoes. These sweet potatoes have a great taste that keeps customers coming back for more. Come by our booth and see for yourself.



Booth #2952

HOLLANDIA PRODUCE

Carpinteria, CA

Hollandia Produce, home of the award-winning Live Gourmet family of hydroponically grown vegetables, invites you visit us at our booth. Harvested with its roots intact to preserve freshness, Live Gourmet is "absolutely fresh because it's still alive."



Booth #2957

PERO VEGETABLE COMPANY, LLC

Delray Beach, FL

As a leading grower, distributor and marketer of fresh vegetables and fruits, Pero Vegetable is a name synonymous with high-quality standards and satisfaction. Pero has earned this reputation during the past 100 years, thanks to our unwavering commitment to fulfill our customers' needs.



Booth #3052

BEAUMONT PRODUCTS, INC.

Kennesaw, GA

Veggie Wash, the 100 percent natural fruit and vegetable wash, is now offering two new sizes: a 32-ounce size for soaking bulk produce and refilling the ready-to-use 16-ounce unit, and a 2-ounce trial size for in-store promotions. Come by our booth for great introductory deals and specials on these new sizes.



Booth #3055

NORTH SHORE GREENHOUSES, INC.

Thermal, CA

We provide innovative products to the retail market and specialize in herbs, European and mini cucumbers. We grow in greenhouses to ensure a safe, consistent and high-quality product with year-round availability. North Shore Living Herbs are the freshest, longest lasting herbs available. Stop by and see what's new.



SEE AD ON PAGE 165

fresh healthy quality



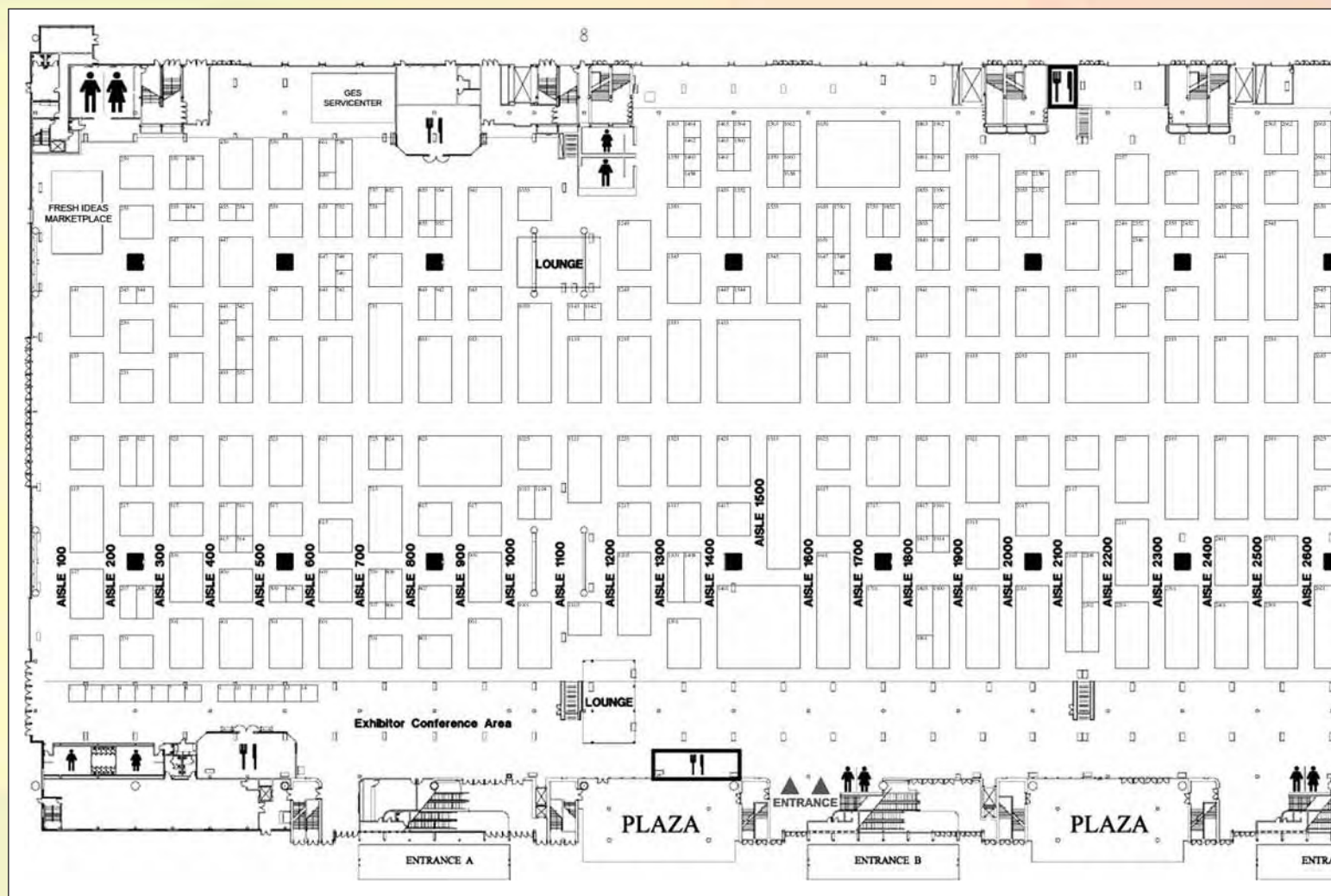
**NO DOUBT
ABOUT IT!™**

Dole Food Company is committed to providing you with the finest fresh fruit and vegetables available. For over 150 years, Dole has set the "gold standard" for quality and safety. That promise has never changed.

Our products promote a healthy lifestyle among your consumers and make your bottom line healthier than ever. No doubt about it.

© 2007 Dole Food Company, Inc. DOLE and No Doubt About It are trademarks of Dole Food Company, Inc.





Booth #3059

CURRY & COMPANY, INC.

Brooks, OR
Curry & Company markets and distributes onions, potatoes and blueberries year-round across North America from our multiple shipping locations throughout the West Coast. Since 1961, discriminating buyers have come to depend on our quality products and our high service level.



Booth #3233

CONCORD FOODS, INC.

Brockton, MA
Concord is a leading manufacturer of value-added, non-perishable items designed to increase fresh produce sales, including smoothie mixes, seasoning pouches, apple crisp, caramel and candy apple kits, dips, pie glazes and shelf-stable lemon and lime juice. Try our new chocolate-flavored dips at our booth.



Booth #3101

LITEHOUSE FOODS

Sandpoint, ID
Come taste our new products and see our exciting consumer-driven programs. Litehouse is an employee-owned company that manufactures and markets refrigerated salad dressing; organic dressing; veggie, caramel and yogurt fruit dips; homemade bleu cheese crumbles; glaze, sauces and freeze-dried herbs.



Booth #3245

linyI jiuLI PRODUCE COMPANY, LTD.

Shandong, China
Linyi Jiuli Produce Company offers Chinese fresh produce, including fresh ginger, garlic, carrots, onions and mushrooms. The majority of our produce comes from Linyi City in China's Shandong Providence.



Booth #3133

SUNSWEEET GROWERS, INC.

Yuba City, CA
Sunswweet offers a wide variety of 100 percent fruit snacks that are highly nutritious and convenient. Products include dried plums, mangos, cranberries, cherries and apricots. Come try our new Sunswweet Ones individually wrapped dried plums — the perfect convenient, healthful and indulgent snack.



Booth #3201

SUNKIST GROWERS, INC.

Sherman Oaks, CA
The growers of Sunkist, one of the world's leading citrus marketers, are dedicated to delivering exceptional quality fresh produce, sourced from around the globe and backed by more than 113 years of expertise in sales, advertising, promotions and transportation.



Booth #3316

PERISHABLE PUNDIT

Boca Raton, FL

There is nothing quite like *Jim Prevor's Perishable Pundit*. The founder and editor-in-chief of *PRODUCE BUSINESS* magazine takes a lifetime of industry experience into cyberspace, allowing readers to learn things not found anywhere else in a context that puts the information into perspective and explains its significance to you and your organization.

Access the Pundit at www.PerishablePundit.com and see for yourself. Or come by our booth and meet Jim Prevor and the whole staff. Come talk to us about your views on issues confronting the industry, about interesting things your organization is doing and learn how an affiliation with the Perishable Pundit can return big benefits to you and your business in the years ahead.



AISLE 3300



Booth #3316

PRODUCE BUSINESS

Boca Raton, FL
This year marks the 22nd anniversary of PRODUCE BUSINESS, the No. 1 publication reaching produce buyers around the world. Covering marketing, merchandising, marketing and procurement issues that affect the sales of produce and floral items, PRODUCE BUSINESS uniquely "initiates industry improvement" in each issue.



Booth #3433

MONTEREY MUSHROOMS, INC.

Watsonville, CA
Monterey Mushrooms will feature new organic products, including an 8-ounce organic white and 8-ounce organic baby bella/brown pack. Oysters and shiitakes are offered in 3.2-ounce organic packs. These products will be showcased along with Monterey's organic portabellos, maitake, king trumpet, brown and white beech mushrooms.



Booth #3455

AGRICAP FINANCIAL CORPORATION

Los Angeles, CA
We are a diversified financial services company that provides a broad range of financial products and services, including accounts-receivable financing, supply-chain financing, import/export financing, real-estate lending, bridge financing, and commercial and agricultural farm loans.



Booth #3333

IDAHO-EAST OREGON ONIONS

Parma, ID
Idaho-East Oregon Onions will present a booth like no other at this year's Fresh Summit. In celebration of 50 years of operating under Federal Marketing Order No. 958, this eye-catching booth will promote Spanish Sweets in a surprisingly fun way. Stop by and get in on the Action.



Booth #3463

HUGH H. BRANCH, INC.

Belle Glade, FL
A leading supplier of sweet corn to foodservice and retail markets in the United States, Canada and Great Britain, we offer a year-round program from multiple growing regions that includes bulk and packaged corn. In recent years, Hugh Branch has diversified, becoming a significant supplier of leafy greens and green beans.



Booth #3419

PACIFIC TOMATO GROWERS/PACIFIC TRIPLE E

Palmetto, FL
The SunRipe family of companies is dedicated to growing, hand-selecting, packing, shipping and marketing the finest tomatoes, vegetables and citrus. The Esformes, Heller and Collier families provide rigorous food safety and handling standards, innovative technology, concern for the environment and appreciation to our employees.



Booth #3501

DOLE FOOD COMPANY

With the return of its award winning Bananimals, Dole showcases its family of top quality fresh fruits and vegetables, including the wide varieties of delicious bananas; the latest offerings from Chile, organic pineapple; and introduces a full line of fresh-cut vegetables that provide timesaving solutions to everyday meals and snacks.

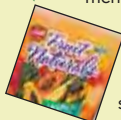


SEE AD ON PAGE 159

Booth #3517

DEL MONTE FOODS

Keller, TX
Del Monte Foods, the refrigerated fruit category leader, announces three new Fruit Naturals items — No Sugar Added Peaches, Hawaiian Style Medley and Apples & Oranges. These unique varieties add excitement to the refrigerated produce shelf and are available in a convenient 8-ounce size — perfect for an on-the-go snack!



Booth # 3550

BABÉ FARMS, INC.

Santa Maria, CA
A premier grower/shipper located on the central coast of California, Babé Farms will exhibit select items from its year-round harvest of more than 30 varieties of baby lettuce, specialty greens, colorful root veggies and baby cauliflower. Creative packs of specialty vegetables, signature salad blends and baby head lettuce will also be displayed.



Booth #3553

COHEN PRODUCE MARKETING

Aspers, PA
We are a group of supply-chain management specialists who supply chain stores in the United States and overseas, as well as importers overseas. We specialize in apples and pears from every major U.S. growing region. We function as shippers, brokers, exporters and ground inspection agents. We also handle a full line of fruits and vegetables.



Booth #3563

PLASTIC SUPPLIERS, INC.

Columbus, OH
Check out EarthFirst PLA film, our revolutionary plastic film made from No. 2 field corn, which is sustainable and compostable. EarthFirst is made from NatureWorks polymers. This film can be used for labeling, shrink-sleeve labeling, flexible packaging, tamper evident bands and windowing applications.



Booth #3613

DOMEX SUPERFRESH GROWERS

Yakima, WA
Domex is the leader in growing and marketing apples, pears, cherries, peaches, nectarines and apricots from the Northwest and the world. Visit our booth to learn how our integrity, intensity and experience can increase your profits and delight your customers.



Booth #3647

HIGH STREET LOGISTICS

San Luis Obispo, CA
A full-service, one-stop source for complete freight transportation services throughout the United States, Canada, and Mexico. A third-party logistics 3PL freight broker, we offer local, regional and national service through more than 15,000 carriers. We have access to thousands of trucks daily looking for loads to haul or back-haul at affordable rates.



Booth #3654

YAKIMA FRESH, LLC

Yakima, WA
With growing, packing and shipping experience dating back to the early 1900s, Yakima Fresh was formed by three of the most successful Northwest growers: Roche, Stadelman and Yakima Fruit. We're your source for Northwest apple, cherry and pear needs.



Booth #3705

HERBTHYME FARMS/AGRIVENTURES USA

Compton, CA
America's largest herb grower and largest certified organic herb grower. Our extended-shelf-life packaging merchandises at room temperature, increases sales and cuts shrink. Servicing accounts coast to coast from California, New England and Florida production facilities. A new facility in the Midwest is coming soon.



Booth #3719

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Dover, DE
Agriculture is Delaware's No. 1 industry. We produce excellent products that are second-to-none in the marketplace. The Delaware Department of Agriculture is committed to providing quality services to assist Delaware's producers to maximize their opportunities to market these products.



Booth #3743

FOUR SEASONS PRODUCE, INC.

Fleetwood, PA
Four Seasons Produce — conventional organic and ethnic solutions for your fresh fruit and vegetable needs; Earth Source Trading — importers and marketers of fresh fruits and vegetables; Sunrise Logistics — your transportation, cross-dock, storage and distribution partner.

Booth #3760

CRAVO EQUIPMENT, LTD.

Brantford, ON
Cravo is the world leader in retractable roofs. Visit our booth and learn how Cravo retractable roof structures are now enhancing quality and improving yields of organically grown produce. New Cravo literature includes retractable A-frame greenhouses, retractable rafter greenhouses and retractable flat roof structures.



Booth #3763

A.M.S. EXOTIC, LLC

Los Angeles, CA
A.M.S. Exotic introduces our Earth Exotic's premium vegetable and steam-cooked vegetable line. We specialize in retail, foodservice and wholesale baby vegetable products nationwide. A.M.S. Exotic offers high quality, convenient, safe specialty vegetables in convenient sizes for super-market chains nationwide.



Booth #3801

FOX PACKAGING

McAllen, TX
Fox Packaging leads the produce packaging industry with the Fox Fresh Mesh line of mesh bags, including the Fox Fresh Mesh Combo bag, the widely popular combination mesh and poly bag.



Booth #3818

KIRKEY PRODUCTS GROUP, LLC

Longwood, FL
A premier provider of software, hardware and consulting solutions for agri-business. Combining in-depth knowledge of agriculture with decades of IT expertise, we deliver applications developed to meet the needs of growers, packers/shippers, sales organizations, food processors, brokers and gift fruit shipping organizations.



Booth #3823

T. MARZETTI COMPANY

Columbus, OH
We will feature hummus, veggie dips and spreads for retail and veggie tray application. New crouton flavors, available in T. Marzetti and Chatham Village varieties, will be showcased. New veggie dip and fruit dip offerings will be available, as well as favorite refrigerated dressings and vinaigrettes.



Booth #3833

WAYNE E. BAILEY PRODUCE CO.

Chadbourne, NC
Wayne E. Bailey offers its customers a diverse selection of sweet potato products. Stop by and see our sweet potatoes from North Carolina, Mississippi, Texas and Louisiana. Don't miss our newest addition and fresh-cut processing company, George Foods, and culinary sweet potato treats from Chef Tony Merola.



Booth #3852

WP SIGN SYSTEMS

Centralia, WA
It is our 75th anniversary of providing eye-catching signage to the supermarket industry, and it is all because of you, our wonderful customers. Please come by our booth for your thank-you gift. If we don't know you yet, come by our booth to receive your thank-you-for-stopping-by gift.



Booth #3943

GRIMMWAY FARMS

Bakersfield, CA
Grimmway Farms is a grower/shipper of fresh and processed carrots, carrot juice concentrate and a full line of organic carrots, fruits and vegetables under the Cal-Organic label. Grimmway also grows and ships year-round supplies of potatoes and citrus.





“Let me guess, you’re local.”

More and more shoppers are asking for regionally grown fruits and vegetables. Pride of New York members offer produce that is seasonal, fresh, and sometimes organic.

Pride of New York. It will add some local color to their table.



Our Pride is Inside.®

For a list of Pride products, visit www.prideofny.com or call 1-800-554-4501.

Visit us at Booth #2221 at the PMA Fresh Summit.

Pride of New York Program www.prideofny.com

Booth #3957

ZUMASYS, INC.

Lake Forest, CA
Zumasys specializes in technology solutions for the fresh fruit, vegetable and floral industry, providing a competitive advantage by increasing productivity, lowering costs and improving system uptime. We can enable your workforce to access all your applications such as Famous, Bluebook, iTrade and more from coolers, fields, and even the car.



Booth #4004

EUROPEAN VEGETABLE SPECIALTIES

Salinas, CA
We are the world's largest radicchio grower and the only grower in North America to harvest fresh daily. Thanks to our seasonal Florida program, Royal Rose radicchio is fresher-bigger-better. Stop by and see why America is asking the redhead, "What's a salad without radicchio?"



Booth #4007

BLUE BOOK SERVICES

Carol Stream, IL
Blue Book Services provides produce businesses worldwide with timely credit ratings, marketing information and trading assistance. Be one of the first to experience Blue Book Online Services — a new and dynamic, credit rating, educational and marketing tool.



Booth #4010

SAMBRAILO PACKAGING

Watsonville, CA
A third-generation family-owned company, Sambrailo has served the agricultural industry since 1923. With locations in California, Mexico and now Florida, we have built our reputation on service and quality. Known for our design-to-distribution packaging innovations, Sambrailo truly does "whatever is best for the produce."



Booth #4015

DEL CAMPO SUPREME

Nogales, AZ
Looking for organic, hydroponic or field-grown tomatoes and color peppers? Del Campo consistently delivers high-quality, high-flavor and safe products. We specialize in 10 tomato types and six bell pepper types, including more than 40 value-added retail packs.



Booth #4018

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Trenton, NJ
The New Jersey Department of Agriculture represents New Jersey's vast agricultural industry and uses the Jersey Fresh marketing and advertising program to showcase the 100 different varieties of fruits and vegetables grown in the Garden State.



Booth #4025

DURAND-WAYLAND, INC.

LaGrange, GA
Our produce packing systems combine technology with easy use and maintenance. We design, produce, install and service full-line packing systems utilizing the latest technology in blemish grading, color sorting, fruit labeling without stickers, melon packing, bin sanitizing, volume fillers, tote dumpers, etc.



Booth #4141

CRYOVAC SEALED AIR CORP.

Duncan, SC
Cryovac's broad produce packaging portfolio includes the Simple Steps heat-and-serve package for microwave steaming fresh vegetables, bags for fresh-cut produce, rollstock and lidstock films, and applications for the oven.



Booth #4203

KEYSTONE FRUIT MARKETING, INC.

Greencastle, PA
The largest producer/marketer of Certified Sweet Onions in the world. Servicing customers across the United States and Canada with sweet onions, hybrid red, white and yellow onions, asparagus, southern peaches and northeastern apples. Maintaining high standards in food safety, food security, third-party certification while utilizing technology.



Booth #4223

EARTHBOUND FARM

San Juan Bautista, CA
America's largest grower and shipper of organic produce and specialty salads, we are pushing clamshell technology to new heights with our innovative new packaging designed to meet foodservice needs. Three of our most popular items, baby spinach, baby arugula and baby lettuce, are now available in 2-pound clamshells.



Food to live by.

Booth #4347

COASTLINE

Salinas, CA
We are a year-round grower/shipper of more than 25 fresh commodities. We grow high-quality, nutritious and delicious vegetables in a wide variety of sizes and pack styles. We pride ourselves on going the extra mile for our customers and being open to constant change.



Booth #4417

MAXCO SUPPLY, INC.

Parlier, CA
Maxco's Long Term Storage packaging system for grapes is the sustainable packaging alternative to EPS or hard plastic containers. LTS is 100 percent recyclable and engineered to withstand high humidity while maximizing the use of renewable source materials.



Booth #4425

BC HOT HOUSE FOODS, INC.

Surrey, BC
BC Hot House Foods is a grower/shipper of the freshest, most flavorful, vine-ripened produce. Our tomatoes, long English cucumbers and sweet bell peppers are grown hydroponically in greenhouses and delivered year-round. You can see and taste our commitment in everything we grow.



Booth #4425

PAN AMERICAN FOODS

Surrey, BC
Pan American Foods combines the unique strengths of BC Hot House Foods and Greenhouse Produce Company to create a larger, more efficient, grower-owned sales and marketing organization. Customers can now access Canadian and Mexican member-grown greenhouse produce year-round from eight warehouse facilities.



Booth #4501

SQF INSTITUTE

Arlington, VA
Learn how the Safe Quality Food (SQF) program, a globally accepted, independent certification system designed specifically for the food sector, can provide a consistent, credible, cost-effective solution to restore consumer confidence. The SQF program is administered by the Safe Quality Food Institute (SQFI), a division of FMI.



Booth #4521

CALIFORNIA GIANT, INC.

Watsonville, CA
California Giant, one of the nation's largest strawberry grower/shippers has expanded its product line to include fresh premium blueberries. The expansion is being met with great enthusiasm and strong demand from new and existing California Giant customers.



Booth #4556

SUNRISE GROWERS, INC.

Placentia, CA
Sunrise Growers is one of the largest producers and marketers of high-quality, fresh strawberries and an exceptional line of red bell peppers. We offer a variety of innovative marketing programs throughout the year to drive higher sales for our customers. We are fully vertically integrated from source to market, ensuring quality throughout the supply chain.



Booth #4606

TREE TOP, INC.

Selah, WA
Tree Top's premium quality apple slice products offer a fresh, authentic taste for your menu items. Crisp, natural, and ready-to-use, Tree Top's fresh slices and chunks are a tasty ingredient. Partner up with our product development team to create signature products that cover any meal occasion.



Booth #4610

AURORA PRODUCTS, INC.

Stratford, CT
Aurora Products offers the highest quality, all-natural and organic nuts, seeds, dried fruits, trail mixes, granolas and our new all-natural candy line. Our products are certified organic and Circle K kosher. In addition to our comprehensive retail program, we offer holiday packaging and shippers. Ask about our new line of organic roasted nuts.



SEE AD ON PAGE 152



Living Watercress

It's Fast

Live Gourmet Living Watercress is so easy to use because prep time is minimal. There's no woody stems, it's iceless and it only needs a quick rinse. Then it's all ready to go!

It's Fresh

Hydroponically-grown and harvested with its roots intact, Live Gourmet Living Watercress is the freshest watercress you can buy! "It's absolutely fresh because it's still alive!"

It's Flavorful

Award-winning Live Gourmet Living Watercress received a Gold Medal for Superior Taste from the American Academy of Taste. Just like the rest of the Live Gourmet Family!



"Live Gourmet Living Watercress is rich in color, loaded with flavor and uniform bunch after bunch. It adds a zesty flavor to wraps, salads, soups and sandwiches and can be highlighted in an entrée or used as a garnish. I just love using it!"

Chef Jill Silverman Hough

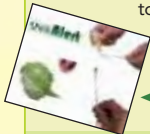
P.O. Box 1327 Carpinteria, CA 93014 (805) 684-4146 • www.LiveGourmet.com



Booth #4632

QA SUPPLIES, LLC

Norfolk, VA
QA Supplies offers QuikAlert, a rapid screening test for microorganisms, such as *E. coli* and *salmonella*, used on food before it is packaged or shipped. While traditional methods for this type of detection require a 24-hour culturing process to determine if a product had been contaminated, QuikAlert does this in 20 minutes.



Booth #4648

SAGE FRUIT CO., LLC

Yakima, WA
Sage Fruit is a grower/shipper/packer of high-quality Washington state tree fruits, including apples, pears, cherries and stone fruit. We grow both conventional and organic products. We service retailers, wholesalers and food service customers. We offer market-by-market marketing plans to fit your business needs.



Booth #4653

ATLAS PRODUCE & DISTRIBUTION, INC.

Bakersfield, CA
Fresh Medjool dates revitalize your produce offerings with eye-catching packaging, excellent quality and great taste that will have your customers coming back for more. Trigger impulse buys and extra register rings, when you display Caramel Natural Fresh Medjool Dates on a year-round basis.

Booth #4701

J&J PRODUCE

Loxahatchee, FL
Catch the Trophy Experience with J&J Produce, the East Coast's leader in supply-chain solutions, delivering produce fresh daily from our farms in Florida, Georgia, Tennessee, the Dominican Republic and Central America. See our source packing solutions and hear about our new Joint Venture with Alico, Inc. that everyone is talking about.



Booth #4707

KES SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Kennesaw, GA
KES is proud to present AiroCide PPT photocatalytic air purifying technology to PMA. The NASA technology enhances quality assurance and extends perishable freshness. The device eliminates airborne mold, bacteria and ethylene gas. It is not a filtering system and emits no ozone or other by-products.



Booth #4753

Z&S FRESH

Fresno, CA
We offer Old El Paso Fresh! salsa kits, avocados, bell peppers, chili peppers, tomatoes, citrus items, squash, and onions, along with Just-Ripe tree fruit, cherries and berries. We also provide Old El Paso Fresh! refrigerated salsa and guacamole along with Progresso refrigerated bruschetta and pesto toppings.



Booth #4833

RAINIER FRUIT COMPANY

Selah, WA
Rainier Fruit's legacy of farming experience drives our commitment to quality in the produce. Our solid horticultural foundation paired with state-of-the-art facilities and unfaltering customer service has positioned us as the leader in the Northwest fruit industry.



Booth #4901

COLUMBIA MARKETING INTERNATIONAL

Wenatchee, WA
As one of Washington state's largest fruit shippers, CMI packs in the quality with premium apples, pears and cherries from fertile valley orchards. Visit our booth to see our new crop of conventional, specialty and organic apples and pears.



Booth #4913

DIMARE FRESH, INC.

Arlington, TX
Welcome to Texas. Please visit our booth!



Booth #4918

PRODUCE PRO, INC.

Woodridge, IL
Produce Pro is a premier provider of software specifically designed for produce distributors. Our comprehensive system provides fully integrated accounting, inventory management, product traceability, comprehensive pricing, order entry, radio frequency, e-commerce, document imaging, business analysis, WMS and much more.



Booth #4923

NATIONAL WATERMELON PROMOTION BOARD

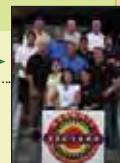
Orlando, FL
The NWPB operates with a single objective — to increase consumer demand for watermelon through promotion, research and educational programs. Today, the NWPB represents growers, shippers and importers of watermelon in the United States.



Booth #4958

JBJ DISTRIBUTING/VEG-LAND/FLOWERLAND

Fullerton, CA
An organic grower, shipper and distributor of produce, we supply flowers, seasonal fruit baskets and organic fresh-cut fruits and vegetables. We specialize in conventional and organic services, such as pre-cooling, storage and cross-dock operations. Regional offices meet our local customers' needs.



Booth #5007

RED BLOSSOM FARMS

Santa Ynez, CA
Committed to quality and safety, Red Blossom has become one of California's leading strawberry producers. In June, we introduced Trace Back, a Web-accessible system that is one of the first electronic traceability programs for strawberries. Red Blossom believes effective Trace Back is critical to a comprehensive and successful food safety program.



Booth # 5023

MASTRONARDI PRODUCE, LTD.

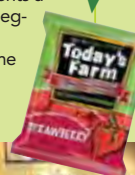
Kingsville, ON
Visit the Campari Café to see the new varieties of Sunset gourmet greenhouse vegetables. New Ancient Sweets, long peppers with a naturally high brix level, are great for salads and stuffing and available in a variety of packages. We deliver year-round Sunset quality-assured gourmet products in custom packages throughout North America.



Booth # 5052

JUSTUS FOODS, INC./TODAY'S FARM

Georgetown, TX
Justus Foods is a food manufacturer creating freeze-dried fruits and vegetables under the Today's Farm brand. Today's Farm represents a brand new healthful snack segment with all the nutritional value of fresh produce. Come by our booth to experience this new taste sensation.



Booth #5060

NATRATEC INTERNATIONAL, LTD.

Katzerin, Israel
Natrateg, a biotechnological company, manufactures Natralife, a natural, organic, edible protective covering for fruits and vegetables to enable longer shelf life. The innovative product does not change the integrity of the produce, but simply delays the ripening process. The result is a longer shelf life and slower dehydration.



Booth #5111

FRUTZZO NATURAL JUICE

Alpine, UT
Frutzzo, a pioneer of high-antioxidant, natural and organic juices since 1999, was the first company in America to create 100 percent fruit juice blends featuring potent antioxidant and nutrient-dense fruits such as pomegranate, blueberries, raspberries and açai. Our juices are distributed nationwide.



Booth #5132

NORTH BAY PRODUCE, INC.

Traverse City, MI
We are a globally operated, grower-owned marketing and distribution cooperative. We grow a diverse range of fresh fruits and vegetables year-round on farms in the United States and Latin America. Our key commodities include apples, asparagus, blueberries, sugar snaps and snow peas.





Floral Aisle-by-Aisle Booth Review

Booth #319

SUTTON FERNERIES, INC.

Miami, FL
Sutton Ferneries is a grower/shipper of quality cut greens with the largest selection of bulk greens, ready-to-go bouquets and pre-greens containers. Our farms are centrally located in Florida with our production and shipping in Miami. Visit our booth and experience the difference. Home of the Greens Drop-in bouquet.



AISLE 800

Booth #806

MICKY'S MINIS FLORAL EXPRESS

Millstadt, IL



Micky's Minis offers unusual and unique potted plants in small pot sizes for every season and holiday. Our group of products includes decorated poinsettias, which are mini poinsettias creatively enhanced with bright paints and eye-catching glitter. Other fun items include our school theme promotion, Gourmet Geraniums and "Off-series" plants.

Booth #3

ARKO ASSOCIATES, INC.

Spring, TX
We offer ceramic, metal and basket containers — empty or complete with fresh foliage, along with vases and artificial flowers from home décor to seasonal styles. Green Expression is our new line of living home décor, which is small enough to be flexible, but big enough to be competitive.



Booth #141

FTD, INC.

Downers Grove, IL



FTD, one of the largest floral companies in the world, is the leader in quality, artistry and dependability, introduces FTD Premium Bouquet, a new consumer offer that includes a reward card giving bouquet-purchasing consumers \$10 off their next FTD delivery order placed at stores, phone or via the Web site of the retailer where they purchased the product.

Booth #306

MEI SPECIALTY REFRIGERATION AND FIXTURES

LaGrange Park, IL
MEI offers a line of topless, low profile, open floral merchandisers' stands that allow customers to shop easily. The low height makes it ideal for merchandising cut flowers anywhere in a store. Open at the front for easy customer access, the merchandiser is available in a 3-tier configuration.



Booth #416

SILVER MOUNTAIN CHRISTMAS TREES

Sublimity, OR
When it comes to Christmas trees, your customers expect you to be the expert. So let Silver Mountain Christmas Trees make you look good by supplying you with elegant, sculptured and fresh trees your customers will love.



Booth #532

BURTON + BURTON

Bogart, GA
Family-owned and operated, Burton + Burton is one of the largest suppliers of balloons and coordinating gift products in the world. The company offers more than 15,000 products, such as latex and foil balloons, ribbon, floral supplies, plush, ceramics and baskets. Celebrating 25 years of superior service, selection and satisfaction. We accept low minimum orders and can ship within 24 hours.



Booth #558

ARMELLINI INDUSTRIES, INC.

Palm City, FL



Since 1945, Armellini subsidiaries have offered Total Floral Logistics. Our company-owned equipment transports floral products from California and Florida across the United States. All trailers are decked and temperature-controlled at 38° F to maintain the cold chain. We offer customs clearing, over-the-road, air reservation and freight brokerage services.

Booth #1363

PAGTER INNOVATIONS

Itasca, IL
Pagter Innovations develops, manufacturers and markets packaging systems for cut flowers. Our most popular product is the Procona container. This year, Pagter Innovations, will present a new size Procona. Available in heights of 25, 30 and 35 cm, the London Procona is 33x30 cm in dimension.



Booth #1464

BOTANICAL INTERESTS, INC.

Broomfield, CO
Botanical is a family-owned garden seed company with stunning packaging, high-quality seed, timely order shipping, great customer service and products not sold to the national discounters. We offer 120 certified organic and reasonably priced varieties, along with 380 untreated varieties.



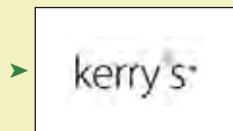
More Floral Exhibitors on next page ▶



AISLE 1700

Booth #1701

KERRY'S BROMELIAD NURSERY
Homestead, FL



These qualities are synonymous with Kerry's — beautiful product, consistent performance and the highest of standards in providing for every type of consumer. And now we offer a new, high-fashion look. Backed by a new logo, Kerry's is combining its exceptional product with brand new, unique containers and design elements from all over the world.

AISLE 1800

Booth #1817

HIGHLAND SUPPLY CORPORATION
Highland, IL

Operating since 1937, Highland is the world's leading manufacturer of decorative floral packaging. Product lines include: Speed Cover plant covers, Clearplane film, Plastifoil florists foil, wire tools and florist wire supplies, Picture Perfect flat plant covers, Bellina flat plant covers, Monza and Tessera plant wrapping sheets, Wrapid-O film sleeves, Easter grass and more.



AISLE 1900

Booth #1941

HAWAIIAN SUNSHINE NURSERY, INC.
Hilo, HI



Our Hawaiian Volcano Plants are distinctive plants grown on volcanic cinder. Hand selected, each rock is unique and original and provides an excellent habitat for growing exotic plants. These plants are easy to care for and perfect for home, office, restaurant/lounge, tabletops and water gardens.

Booth #1941

HAPPY HAWAIIAN PLANTS

Naalehu, HI
Hawaiian Floral Fusion features grown-in-Hawaii orchid plants with flowers made of botanically correct, clay art representations. This is an extraordinary gift for the office or home. Merchandiser friendly, requiring no watering during the in-store display. Long shelf life with no fragile blossoms.



AISLE 2700

Booth #2758

TEXAS STATE FLORISTS' ASSOCIATION
Austin, TX

The Texas State Florists' Association was founded in 1914. The TSFA growers' division booth will include four Texas growers featuring potted plants including year-round and seasonal blooming and foliage plants.



AISLE 3300

Booth #3323

NURSERYMEN'S EXCHANGE, INC.
Half Moon Bay, CA



Nurserymen's Exchange is your home and garden wholesale partner, providing innovative solutions for your business needs since 1941. We offer distinctive quality products year-round including blooming plants, tropicals, home décor accents and outdoor garden plants and accessories.

Booth #3352

FLORAL CONSULTING GROUP
Spokane, WA

Floral Consulting Group is an ultimate resource for your floral business. As seasoned sales, marketing and floral professionals, we turn experience into profits. We are responsive, targeted and results-oriented. We deliver comprehensive and clear plans to produce more for your business today.



AISLE 3800

Booth #3852

WP SIGN SYSTEMS
Centralia, WA



WP Sign Systems has your solution for floral signage. Our magnetic sign kit includes more than 200 names and changeable pricing. We have several styles to choose from to complement the beauty of your flowers. Got your own list? We fill custom orders at surprisingly affordable prices. Stop by our booth for more information.

AISLE 4000

Booth #4010

SAMBRAILO PACKAGING
Watsonville, CA



A third-generation family-owned company, Sambrailo has served the floral and produce industries since 1923. With locations in California, Mexico, and Florida, we have built our reputation on service and quality. Known for our design-to-distribution packaging innovations, Sambrailo truly does "whatever is best for the produce."

Booth #4052

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New Transport Technology Gets Green Light

A variety of efforts are on the horizon

BY TONY SEIDEMAN

Green is gaining traction in the produce transportation industry.

Although some companies say they are seeing little demand for it, numerous others are investing significant amounts of time and money in high-efficiency, low-impact transport technology.

Government subsidies are playing a key role in most of these programs, with many businesses working directly with state, federal or local agencies, or relying on subsidies to make the systems affordable.

So far, the cost of implementing the new technologies is not matched by the efficiencies they bring. This is one of the main reasons subsidies are so important. But, in the long term, they could change the way goods are moved in America and all over the world.

Proponents hope to follow a path that has proven potent and successful for American transport since the construction of the Erie Canal — using a mix of government cash and entrepreneurial inventiveness to help nascent transport systems make the costly leap from great idea to reliable tool.

Not all the programs are directly produce-related, but there is a good chance they will have an impact on the movement of perishable goods. Some

are catalytic in scope and may have a dramatic impact in seeding the acceptance of new technologies and fueling their adoption throughout the industry.

Members of the produce business are optimistic about their potential. "It's all beginning to take shape," says Matthew D'Arri-

go, co-president of the Hunts Point Cooperative Market and partner in D'Arrigo Brothers Transportation, Bronx, NY. "In the next five years, you'll see a shift to more environmentally friendly, efficient vehicles," he says.

Not everyone agrees — especially companies that do not have support in cushioning the bottom-line impact of the new technology. "No, we're not thinking of that," says Paul Boelter, vice president of operations at Dallas, TX-based FFE Transportation Services, Inc. "We're a common carrier. If some produce supplier has his own fleet, maybe he'd be thinking of some other technology to keep his produce cold. I don't know. But for us, from a cost standpoint there's nothing out there."

Still, a number of major projects are underway, and some carriers and manufacturers are working hard to develop and implement new technologies. Among the most interesting efforts are:

D'ARRIGO BROTHERS AND NEW YORK STATE

Reducing environmental impact is critical, particularly in America's most densely populated urban areas. So, it is no surprise that New York and California are the sites of some of the most interesting programs.

"We're trying to get a pilot program going," D'Arrigo explains. His focus is on clean air rather than energy efficiency. Given the direct health impact pollution has on its citizens, New York state is willing to put serious money behind clean energy research. "We're working with the New York State Department of Transportation and the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority [Albany, NY]," he continues.

Without government support, any changeover would probably be almost impossible, D'Arrigo continues. "It's not a cheap task to change a truck from a diesel to a natural gas — you buy a diesel truck and send it to someone who does the refit. But there's money out there to do the changeover, so you don't get yourself in a non-competitive environment and get put at a disadvantage because of



Photo courtesy of Carrier Transcold

the cost of transportation.”

PORT OF LOS ANGELES HYBRID TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT EFFORT

By today's standards, Los Angeles/Long Beach is not shoveling out huge amounts of money, but its willingness to work with equipment designers and manufacturers to expand to new markets will result in significant new products on the market in the next few years.

Los Angeles is taking a careful approach. Most of its systems will be built upon founda-

tions already developed in other industries. Virtually all will make the machines they drive more efficient and cleaner.

This has the potential to directly impact the produce transport industry, since it will transform machinery from forklifts to railroad locomotives. Some of the maritime industry's and world's most-recognized companies are involved in the Los Angeles/Long Beach project with players such as General Electric, based in Fairfield, CT, and Allison Transmission, based in Indianapolis, IN, providing machines or key systems. At present, it looks as if the initial costs will be

Carrier And Tesco

Refrigeration is an essential element of perishables transport. It is also a major energy consumer, so it is no surprise major refrigeration manufacturers such as Carrier Corporation, based in Farmington, CT, and Thermo King, based in Minneapolis, MN, are putting a lot of time and energy into increasing the energy efficiency of the systems they offer.

Besides making its equipment physically more efficient, Carrier is also looking to make it easier for drivers to use it, providing a further boost to energy efficiency. Such systems focus on things like the critical period when cargo is first loaded in a vehicle and needs to be cooled down.

“We provide the customer with the ability to program their equipment based on their ambient temperature,” says Ignacio Aguerrevere, director of marketing, Carrier Transport America, Eagan, MI. Many drivers set their initial temperatures lower than they need to be in the usually mistaken assumption this will cool things down more quickly.

By using product chill systems, companies can magnify the energy savings they are already getting by relying on multi-temperature systems. Carrier's marriage of computers and refrigeration also makes it much easier for drivers to choose the temperature of their different compartments. Instead of working through hard-to-understand text-based systems, a visual menu helps drivers easily and quickly program proper temperatures for each commodity loaded into the vehicle.

These systems are so appealing that British retailer Tesco, headquartered in Cheshunt, Hertfordshire, England, has committed to Carrier for the refrigeration equipment in all the trucks it purchases as it moves into the U.S. market. “For multi-temperature applications, Tesco looked at us,” Aguerrevere says. “One hundred percent of their order was for Carrier and the new products it offered,” he says. **pb**

borne by the ports and terminal operators themselves, which will then share the expense with other facilities' users.

Such basic tools as forklifts and tractors could benefit from the effort. Local authorities are providing a tractor manufacturer with \$1.2 million to develop a new generation of hybrid tractors. Field tests on the new



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equipment will start in about a year and a half, with fuel consumption reductions expected to total 40 percent or better — a good number, but far less than enough to pay for the cost of the improved machines.

MITSUBISHI FUSO'S HYBRID VEHICLES

This important Japanese truck manufacturer is already taking the hybrid path, but its new units are going to be awhile reaching U.S. shores because of regulatory and financial hurdles, warns Joe Devlin, director of corporate communications, Mitsubishi Fuso Truck of America Inc., Bridgeport, NJ.

"We introduced a hybrid electric truck in Japan and we're looking to do that here," Devlin says. The Japanese trucks premiered in 2006 and offer a 30 percent increase in fuel economy. Still, the improvements by themselves will not pay for the cost of implementation.

"When you have the subsidies the government was offering and the volumes they're projecting for full production, it will be a wash," Devlin says. "With the subsidies, costs will drop 10 to 15 percent compared to conventional vehicles. Patience will be among the most important thing businesses that want to start using the trucks will need. They're not going to be introduced here before 2010 because Mitsubishi needs to develop a U.S.-emission-compliant engine that works with the hybrid power train."

AMERICAN RAILROADS

Estimates are that the cost to move a 40-foot container across the continent by rail is 30 percent of the cost to move it by truck, and railroads are certainly eager to trumpet their advantages.

"The fuel use and the fuel conservation here is one of our biggest contributions to the environment," says Gary Sease of Jacksonville, FL-based CSX Corp. Railroads are trying to add to this advantage by purchasing new equipment that offers an even bigger environmental edge.

"We're purchasing locomotives that are much more environmentally friendly than they used to be," Sease says. His company is working with General Electric and Springfield, NJ-based Electromotive, the two biggest locomotive producers in the United States. CSX is also taking a specific look at produce and the refrigerated market and how it can increase efficiency there.

"We're all looking at hybrid technology," Sease says. "So far we've experimented with it. We haven't made a big commitment to it yet. Initially, the focus will be on hybrid locomotives working in rail yards."

A new generation of locomotives has the

potential to improve things even further. Responding in part to pressure from Southern California, General Electric is working on "next generation" engines that will store surplus energy in non-lead batteries, cutting fuel consumption by as much as 15 percent and greenhouse emissions by 50 percent.

Environmental damage costs everybody something. But the reality is that the price tag is a diffuse one, which can make coming up with the money to fix things a tough choice. This truth is placing roadblocks in the way of the rapid adoption of clean, efficient technology by the produce transportation industry.

"For the most part, there's a general interest. People want to be ecologically friendly," relates Craig Cahill, director of perishable logistics for La Canada, CA-based Allen Lund Company, a third-party logistics provider. "But the cost factor is constantly being weighed, and it doesn't seem the technology has met the demand yet in terms of implementing viable solutions," he says. "I'd love to see it happen but, unfortunately, it hasn't been a real driving force yet, even though I can see it on the forefront of everybody's mind."

pb



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Pistachio Industry Braces For Banner Crop

More availability creates year-round demand for pistachios.

BY MAURCIA DELEAN HOUCK

Once considered a holiday specialty, pistachios are more than just a good winter seller. Today's higher yield crops have made this popular nut an everyday snack enjoyed by millions.

With more than 400 million pounds of California pistachios expected to be harvested this fall, preliminary reports indicate industry sales will reach \$700 million in 2007, says Marc Seguin, director of marketing for Paramount Farms, based in Los Angeles, CA. Sales are expected to double within the next seven years, he adds.

This is good news for produce retailers who have found pistachios to be a big profit-maker in recent years.

Packaged pistachio sales have increased nearly 70 percent since the late 1990s, Seguin says. Higher demand and higher yield has made pistachios one of the fastest growing categories within the produce industry.

"Pistachios are one of the most profitable items in the produce department," he says, estimating that retailers who take the time and energy to promote the product properly can easily increase sales by 400 percent or more in a very short period of time. "The secret is to create compelling displays and find a hot-price point."

According to Mia Cohen, COO, Setton Pistachio of Terra Bella Inc., Commack, NY, "Product placement is very important. A well-placed display in the customer's line of sight, coupled with good pricing or even a coupon offering is what sells pistachios."

HEALTH MESSAGE KEY TO INCREASED SALES

Healthful eating recommendations released last year by the U.S. Department of



Photo courtesy of California Pistachio Commission

Popular pistachios offer retailers an opportunity for substantial profit.

Agriculture (USDA) urging Americans to eat more nuts for better heart health, have helped raise public awareness of the many health attributes of pistachios. Now that people are more aware of how healthful pistachios are, it is up to retailers to use more health-related displays to drive up sales, industry experts say.

"Now is the time to put the spotlight on pistachios," says Dr. David Heber, director of the Center of Human Nutrition at the University of California in Los Angeles. "Delicious, satisfying and good-for-you, pistachios are an excellent snack choice that is naturally cholesterol-free and a good source of eight important nutrients."

These are exactly the type of claims most industry experts tell retailers to stress on their signage. "Recent health messages have

been a big boon to pistachio sales in the last year or so," agrees Theresa Keenan, president of Keenan Farms in Avenal, CA. "Use your in-store displays to tell about that, and encourage consumers to reach for pistachios instead of other more traditional snack foods. Surprisingly, if these displays are placed in prominent positions throughout the produce department, sales increase dramatically," she advises.

This, according to Keenan, proves pistachios are a favorite choice among today's healthier snacker. "The message is clear," she says, "pistachios are a healthful snack that people love, and by the pound, they are cheaper than potato chips. That's a big message to push when trying to increase sales."

Growers such as Keenan Farms offer online pistachio recipes that encourage the

use of pistachios in a heart-healthy diet, all in an attempt to raise public awareness about pistachios and generate more super-market sales.

KNOW YOUR CUSTOMER

"Another strategy employed by pistachio growers and retailers nationwide is recognizing who your consumer is and targeting that specific group," according to Setton's Cohen. "Different consumers require different packaging, promotion and product marketing. Right now, we're finding packed tubs displayed on a low-profile at the end of produce tables are most effective for the average pistachio buyer, but we realize that as our customers' needs change, so must our marketing and packaging strategy."

Paramount Farms' Seguin agrees, adding that marketing to different demographic groups will require changes in product placement, availability and advertising in



Photo courtesy of Paramount Farms

order to reach new customers. "At Paramount Farms we've introduced several new pistachio products to service many different kinds of pistachio consumers," he explains.

As pistachio growers and producers

strive to provide more packaging and marketing options for pistachio products, retailers are being urged to do the same when promoting pistachios within their stores.

A SOCIAL SNACK

A major selling point retailers should capitalize on is that pistachios are a very social snack enjoyed by the masses,

which makes promotion around holidays and special events very important, Seguin says. "Pistachios are most often enjoyed at social occasions — holiday get-togethers, parties, sporting events, among others — and need to be marketed properly for these



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bottom line when
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nently and marketed
properly."**

**— Marc Seguin
Paramount Farms**



California Pistachios

Grower • Processor • Roaster • Manufacturer • Packer • Exporter

As America's largest vertically integrated supplier of pistachios and cashews, Setton markets "America's Best Tasting Pistachios". Naturally cholesterol free with no trans fat, pistachios also make a heart healthy snack. A full line of nuts, dried fruits, snacks, seeds, trail mixes and candies round out Setton's product offerings. Produce programs include promotions and eye catching displays that attract the consumers attention thus increasing sales. Call Joseph Setton today for more information.

PROCESSING FACILITY

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9370 Road 234 • Terra Bella, CA 93270

Phone: 559.535.6050 • Fax: 559.535.6089

info@settonfarms.com • www.settonfarms.com

CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS

Setton International Foods, Inc.

85 Austin Boulevard • Commack, NY 11725

Phone: 631.543.8090 • Fax: 631.543.8070

occasions.

"For instance, Super Bowl Sunday is one of the highest consumption dates for pistachios," Paramount Farms' Seguin continues, making it important for retailers to recognize the importance of including pistachios in their Super Bowl snack displays, as well as advertising.

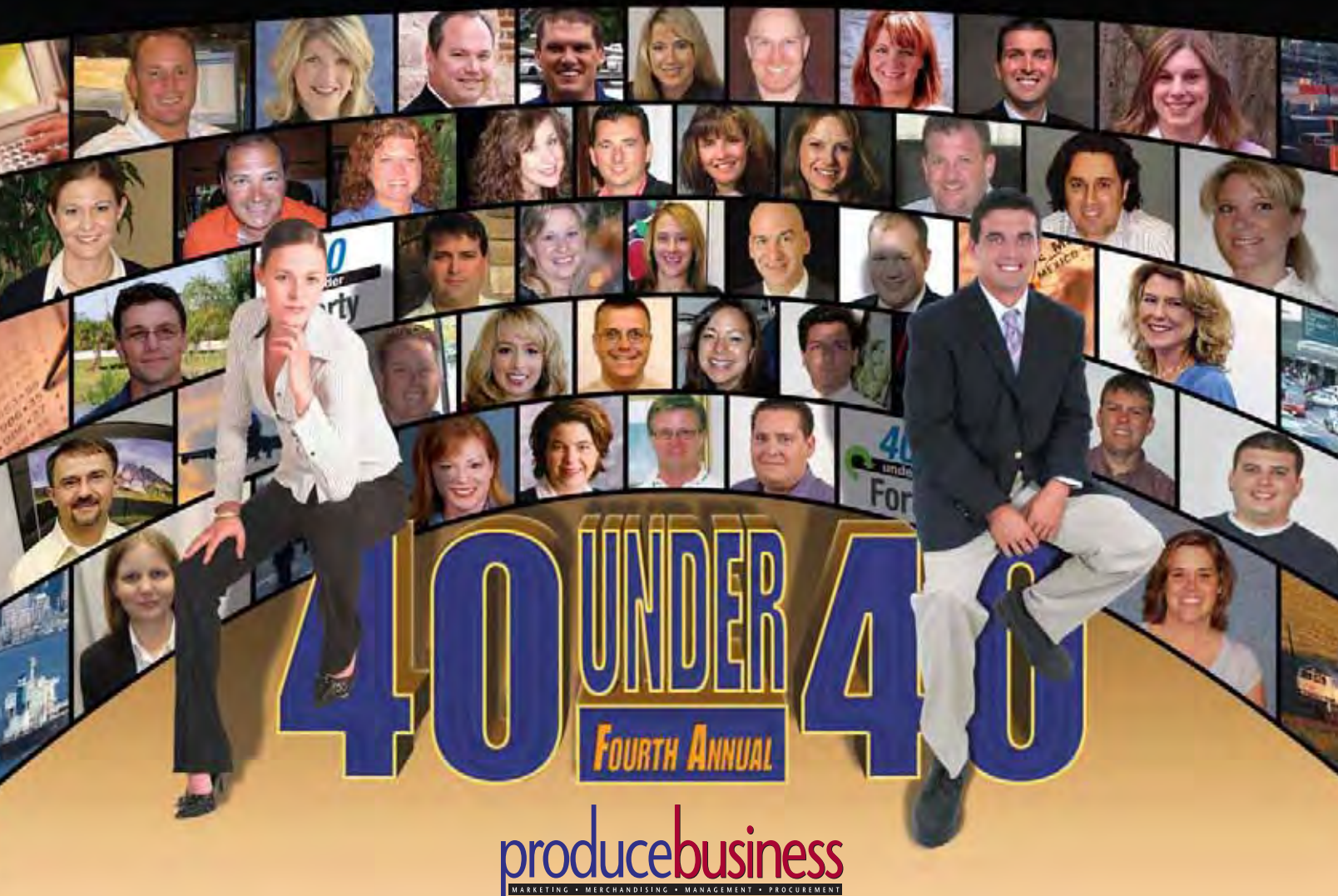
The winter holidays are also a traditional peak selling season for pistachios, Seguin adds, making gift tins, party packaging and even unique recipe suggestions essential marketing tools in driving up holiday sales.

MAKING PISTACHIOS A YEAR-ROUND PRODUCT

Limited crop yields in the past may have made pistachios a temporary fall/winter favorite, but an increase in growing capacity and crop yields during the past two decades now make pistachios a popular snack food that can be enjoyed year-round.

"The average consumer is used to having pistachios available around the holidays, but they may be surprised to learn that they can now enjoy them 12 months a year now," explains Seguin. It is therefore crucial for retailers to prominently display their pistachio inventory year-round. "When consumers see pistachios, they buy them," he stresses.

"Compelling displays can help lift sales and keep them steady throughout the year — not just at holiday time," Seguin adds. "Pistachios have a great potential for raising a retailers bottom line when displayed prominently and marketed properly." **pb**



PRODUCE BUSINESS is accepting nominations for its third annual 40 Under Forty Project, which recognizes the produce industry's top young leaders.

Honorees will be selected based on their professional accomplishments, demonstrated leadership and industry/community contributions. To be eligible, nominees must be under the age of 40 as of April 1 (People born after April 1, 1968).

To nominate someone, please fill out this form by April 1, 2008, and fax back to 561-994-1610.

Once nominated, the candidate will receive forms from us to fill out asking for detailed information. A candidate only needs to be nominated one time. Multiple nominations will have no bearing on selection.

ABOUT THE NOMINEE:

First Name _____ Last Name _____
 Approximate Age _____
 Company _____
 Position _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Postal Code _____
 Country _____
 Phone _____ Fax _____
 E-mail _____

In 100 words or less, describe why this person should be nominated:
 (You can use a separate sheet for this)

Nominee's Professional Achievements:

Nominee's Industry/Community/Charitable Activities:

ABOUT THE NOMINATOR:

First Name _____ Last Name _____
 Company _____
 Position _____
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 City _____ State _____ Postal Code _____
 Country _____
 Phone _____ Fax _____
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Nominator information is for our use only and will not be shared with candidate or have a bearing on selection.

For more information email: producebusiness@phoenixmedianet.com

Surge In Succulent Sales

Expanding supermarket floral department can increase overall sales.

BY MAURCIA DELEAN HOUCK

A surge in demand for succulents during the past two to five years has offered grocery retailers a unique opportunity to increase sales in what has traditionally been a lower-profit area of the store.

Lower profit no more, says Louise Strutner, company representative for Nurserymen's Exchange, Half Moon Bay, CA. She believes supermarket plant sales continue to rise, thanks in large part to the ever-growing trend of using big, beautiful succulents in today's home and office décor.

"Succulents are hot right now and getting hotter," stresses Strutner. "Creating big, beautiful succulent gardens in a variety of containers are all the rage, and any retailer willing to get on the bandwagon is sure to see a dramatic increase in profits."

Doug Painter, U.S. sales manager for Sorensen Greenhouses, Ruthven, ON, Canada, says succulent and cactus sales can easily become one of a retailer's most profitable categories. "People are fascinated by succulents and cacti due to their shapes, sizes, colors and forms. These intriguing plants attract customers to make multiple purchases because each plant is so unique and different. This gives supermarkets an item that can draw attention to the floral department and generate some of the highest dollar-per-square-foot returns."

Both Strutner and Painter believe the key to increasing sales is to draw the consumer to the product.

"Provide as much color and interesting varieties as possible" Painter advises. "The wider the amount of variety, the faster the product sells."

"Showcase your inventory in large garden containers," Strutner suggests. "Even if



The wide variety of colors, textures and shapes makes cacti and succulents popular with consumers.



Photos courtesy of Sorensen Greenhouses, Inc.

you don't sell large succulent gardens, it will show your customers how beautiful and rich these plants look together." This can help generate larger sales as customers reach for three or four individual plants to display together at the home or office, instead of the one they originally planned to buy.

When displaying succulents and cacti, retailers should take special care to showcase as much color and texture as possible," she continues. Combining the right plants can be very dramatic and consumer pleas-

ing — marketing ploys that help generate additional sales.

Bob Reidmuller, resident horticulturist of Altman Plants, Inc., Vista, CA, urges retailers to use succulents and cacti in special-offer or special-event displays as much as possible in other parts of the store. "If your store is running a Southwestern theme or western days promotion, include the plants in a major display with featured items such as chips and salsa, guacamole or avocados. These plants make excellent decorative accents and can help increase food sales as well as show customers how they can use them for inexpensive decorating if they are having some kind of get-together at home."

Painter advises his retailers to tie cacti and succulents into promotional themes in order to maintain high sales year-round. "Although they started out being summer plants used on patios and porches, they have now become a year-round seller, thanks to the ingenuity of today's savvy marketing teams."

In addition to tying cacti and succulents to a specific theme or season, Waldo Guerrero, sales and marketing director for Kactus

Korral, Harwood, TX, recommends retailers stress the tolerance of these plants. "No matter what you desire in plants, cacti and succulents have the diversity and adaptability to suit any lifestyle." They are extremely tolerant of neglect and require little water or care, making them a wonderful choice for those without a green thumb.

Another benefit to adding succulents and cacti to a supermarket's floral inventory is that they can help a retailer keep a fresh

These plants offer so much variety that grocers have found many consumers returning again and again to add a new and different one to their plant collection.

look to the department all year, says Nurserymen's Strutner. "Cactus and succulents provide an extremely large group of diverse plants to choose from."

Some examples include Echeverias, Color Grafts, Hawthoria, Zebra and the sim-

ple, very practical Aloe Vera. These plants offer so much variety that grocers have found many consumers returning again and again to add a new and different one to their plant collection.

Altman Plants took this concept to a new level when it introduced a new line of collectable plants called Spiny Friends,

designed to offer younger consumers a way to learn about the variety of succulents and cacti available. Although a hit with many consumers in their 20s and early 30s, the line has become a hit with children.

"Children have a natural curiosity for succulents and cacti — maybe because of their natural weirdness in color and texture compared to other plant varieties," explains Altman's Reidmuller. "Both succulents and cacti are very tactile plants — hard, bumpy, fuzzy, etc. — and this is appealing to children." These "kid magnets," can be money in the bank for the savvy retailer who recognizes the untapped potential of this often overlooked consumer.

"Since cacti and succulents are often very low maintenance and very inexpensive plants, parents are likely to purchase them on an impulse when shopping with children," agrees Kactus Korral's Guerrero. "Stores which target this unique consumer base with colorful displays aimed specifically at kids can expect to double or triple their cacti sales almost immediately."

With sales continuing to increase in the cacti and succulent plant market, it's especially important for supermarkets to showcase them in their floral departments to ensure that they tap into this ever-growing and profitable consumer market. **pb**

Succulents And Cacti Must-Haves

With literally hundreds of varieties of succulents and cacti plants to choose from, it can often be difficult for supermarkets with limited space to know what's best to stock. According to Louise Strutner, spokesperson for Nurserymen's Exchange, Half Moon Bay, CA, it is always best to include varieties that complement each other in color, shape, roughness, etc., in order to give consumers a better idea of how to use the plants together. This allows the retailer to sell more and maintain a fresh look throughout the department all year.

Doug Painter, U.S. sales and marketing manager for Sorensen Greenhouses, Ruthven, ON, Canada, agrees. He suggests retailers always stock the following basic plants:

Echeveria: This plant is known for its variety of color ranging from ghostly white to phosphorescent pink to blood red.

Hawthoria or Zebra: These are tough plants that prefer low light conditions, making them great desk and coffee-table plants.

Aloe Vera: Always a favorite, this plant has unique shape and texture, as well as excellent medicinal purposes — it is a natural treatment for burns and scrapes — making it both practical and beautiful.

Color Grafts: This type of cactus is grafted from two separate plants to create a new variety. It is bright and beautiful, making it a real crowd pleaser.

"With so many different colors and textures to choose from, these plants can keep an otherwise dull floral department looking fresh and sparking interest," Painter says. "They provide color at times when there might not otherwise be color, which can attract more customers during more typical slow-selling seasons." **pb**



Cacti and succulents are easy to care for and provide interesting color options throughout the year.

Photo courtesy of Sorensen Greenhouses, Inc



Marketing Research And Analysis

Market research in the mid-20th century was pretty basic: Measure raw sales volume in relation to what consumers said they would do and then decide if additional promotion was needed to reach the objective.

Back then, marketing Professor Max Brunk at Cornell University was adopting new statistical measurement tools for the evaluation of sales results and identifying consumer choice differences according to what sales were done and what consumers said they would do.

For decades, most businesses took the one-size-fits-all marketing approach. In other words, the variation among consumer interests for an individual product or individual retail outlets was minimized in the minds of marketing leaders.

Gradually, researchers began to recognize different purchasing patterns among broadly defined groups with contrasting demographic make up. Slowly, the recognition that shopping habits varied among distinct socioeconomic and expanding ethnic groups emerged. Researchers applied interesting nomenclature to six or eight groups, and companies began differentiating product offerings accordingly to match up with individual retailers' merchandising programs.

Computerization combined with improved software programs to allow the manipulation of sales data tied to information from frequent shopper cards, and shotgun marketing transformed to a rifle-shooting approach.

Retailers' adjusted product offering inside the four walls became the focus cliché — category management. However, the overall direction still continued, except for minor variations with the same macro retailing approach.

On its way to becoming the largest food retailer, Wal-mart became particularly adept at building similarly merchandised boxes with limited variation in marketing strategy while it continued adding market share. For the most part, competitors searching for answers to the juggernaut were making revisions but, with few exceptions, the tide was carrying nearly all units of individual retailers in the same direction.

While almost everyone had a few thrusts into somewhat different consumer marketing endeavors, the tons of marketing information were not altering marketing directions focused on individual consumer segments.

Food Lion becomes an excellent case study. Known as an organization that operated small- to mid-size units with a focus on price, Food Lion eventually started being out-priced by larger volume big-box stores with greater variety. Finally, with new leadership, the chain recognized a new approach was necessary for growth and sur-

vival. Attempting to change from within would almost be a formula for failure. Regardless how capable individuals are, it is difficult to visualize necessary changes to the same degree as someone with varied experience and a fresh pair of eyes.

Going outside is precisely what occurred when Food Lion hired Mike Haaf, Office Depot's executive vice president of marketing, to be its senior vice president of sales and marketing nearly five years ago. The challenge was to identify and understand who the consumers are and what their wants and needs are. The objective was to customize the shopping experience for the consumer and develop stores conducive to specific groups of consumers and to provide them with exactly what they want.

To better understand its consumers, Food Lion conducted in-depth research, surveying nearly a million individuals. Direct personal interviews, observation of shopping trips and surveys were utilized to acquire the data. The research involved investigating shopping habits, how people perceived the total grocery shopping experience and general lifestyle information.

After compiling all of the data, the research team identified eight distinct groups of consumers. The challenge became bringing category management, store operations, pricing and marketing associates together to develop the future implementation process.

Haaf was once quoted as saying, "We've really developed a rigorous, well-structured approach to understanding intimately the wants and need of different customer groups."

Bringing the information into reality has fathered the development of the strikingly different Bloom and Bottom Dollar banners. The latest generation of Bloom stores in South Carolina represents a dramatic departure from both the old and the current Food Lion image. The research has also resulted in approximately 30 Food Lion stores in Washington, D.C., and the Maryland and Virginia suburbs being re-merchandised and converted to the Bloom nameplate. Altogether, 50 stores in the Southeast now sport the marketing philosophy of being the "grocery store of choice, not one of the choices." Here, produce takes on a whole new merchandising perspective.

After a great beginning, it will be worth watching how Food Lion and Haaf go about marketing to the remaining identified consumer segments. How many more banners with appropriate adjustments will be required to serve the balance of the customer base?

Meanwhile, suppliers should be well aware of this marketing dimension. Will significant differences for the fresh fruit and vegetable supply chain be required? The whole produce industry needs to partner with the findings.

**For decades,
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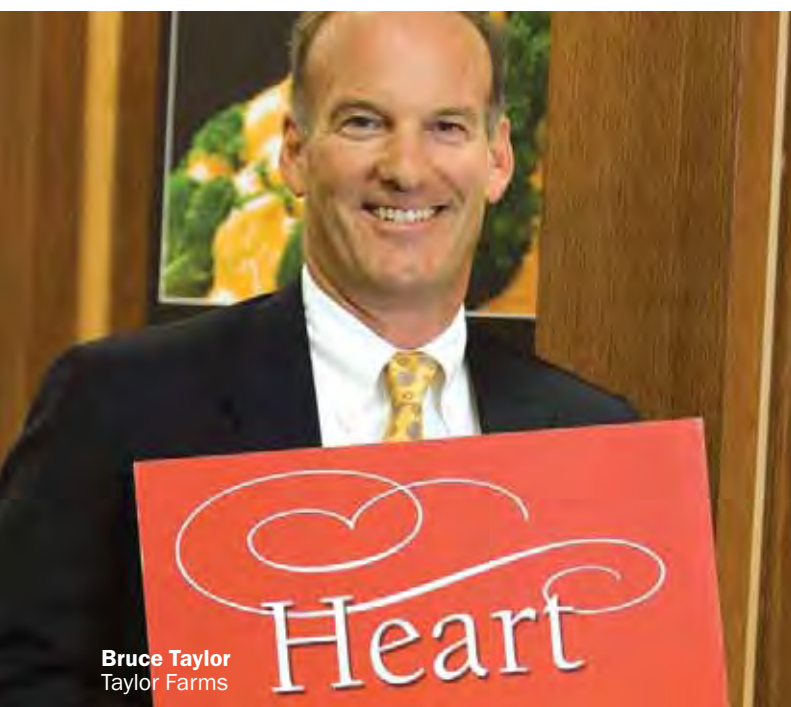


Jin Ju Wilder
Coast Produce



Eduardo Leyson
Castro, Ciruli Bros.

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Bruce Taylor
Taylor Farms



Tom Casas
Tanimura & Antle

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Green Creativity

Are we turning green or is only “greed turning green” as the Australian Climate Exchange announced in July? By now, most of us have been confronted with the *Inconvenient Truth* of the world’s most successful PowerPoint presentation. Whether it has ignited awareness, been the ultimate wake-up call or become the catalyst for entrepreneurs to smell the money is an issue that will be debated for generations.

Green is a PR gold mine: just have your CEO announce you are going green or carbon-neutral at some point in the next decade, and you are sure to be nominated for some award. Has anyone given the details of how this goal is to be achieved, if it even can? Has anyone analyzed if benefiting the globe was the primary goal, or was it the earnings per share?

To reduce emissions in fresh produce is to produce, ship, sell and consume less. It is to undo globalization, pretend the world is no longer growing in population, squeeze a watermelon into a hole the size of a lemon.

Coupling that with the need to at least curb the growth in emissions while maintaining our current lifestyle is forcing this debate into a thousand different and uncontrolled directions. No one is leading it. By blurring the lines of the debate, the definition of green gets blurred: Some really mean fair trade, others organic, still others the need to change holistically.

So where does Europe stand today? From a “frutero’s” point of view, it is — as always — relative. Compared to what? And how does the picture look inside Europe: Again — always heterogeneous and finely divided by the old borders and cultures.

Countries with smaller populations and those that are somewhat isolated have silently proceeded for a decade with rules and regulations on waste separation, recycling, incentives of fuel-efficient cars etc. In Ireland and Scandinavia, you need to build a shed in your garden for the segregation of waste. Recycling plastic is so expensive consumers no longer want everything wrapped in plastic. The “bag for life” — the grocery bag you bring to the shop over and over again — is a fact of life there; in the United Kingdom, some have recently recognized it as an important, innovative benchmark in going green. In Germany the Gruene Punkt — green point — has been a government law, which regulates the recycling of all consumer packs in the market, since 1990.

Let’s move to fuel: In Europe overall fuel standards are very acceptable. Granted, we cannot get ourselves to trade in our German racing models for a Prius, but a diesel-powered Smart at 60 mpg easily beats the hybrid. And it is cool and fun to drive! In Sweden today half

of the taxis drive on natural gas produced from waste; in the United Kingdom some 22,000 trucks can drive a whole year on the waste of fresh produce alone. In Holland, we drive largely on LPG — liquid petroleum gas. In Germany, many cars mix diesel with bio-fuels.

So far we are treating symptoms. We are missing the creativity for real solutions. For example, two alternatives were recently offered — build 100-meter-wide stretches of trees on either side of all highways. It would absorb CO₂ emissions of cars and at the same time provide a noise shelter for surrounding houses. Or relocate all greenhouses along the motorways, since tomatoes and cucumbers need CO₂ to prosper. Creative? Yes! Feasible? Worth a try!

In the fresh produce industry, retailers will ask us to help them succeed in their public pledges. All well and good, if they are will-

ing to share the financial burden. Growers around the world will produce CO₂-neutral goods within a decade, especially if we give them an incentive to do so. If a retailer is willing to do it with so called fair-trade profit-sharing schemes, why not on carbon footprints?

Next we need to find a carbon-neutral shipping line. We may need to involve Richard Branson, since his airline Virgin has committed to becoming CO₂-neutral within a decade.

Then we have local transport. Switching to natural gas has huge potential, but we don’t produce enough waste, so we’d need to grow organic produce to fuel the trucks. Will the organics industry allow for this? And will the consumer understand it?

When we have brought the fresh produce to town, will we re-invent our distribution to minimize the carbon footprint? Will consumers accept that their favorite apple may not be available 24/7? Will the produce industry combine

logistics with other industries (dairy, meat) to have only one delivery for all shops in downtown London — regardless of name?

Is the solution biodegradable packaging that turns into compost within 60 days but whose raw materials have to be shipped from the United States via Taiwan to Germany at a huge CO₂ expense, or is it an oil based-package that is going to be around 2000 years from now but that helps us go CO₂-neutral this year?

Whatever the solution, the road is going to be evolutionary and never-ending. But we must get creative. And we must be honest with our customers and ourselves — we do this not solely for altruistic reasons. The fun will be to find a niche that works for your entire supply chain and with increasing independence from oil. It will be a cosmos of x million supply chains. Ideally someone should unite all efforts under one umbrella, so even though we all look to profit from it, we concentrate our efforts on the promising avenues.

pb

Growers around
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tive to do so.



The Green Journey

As director of communications for Earthbound Farm, the country's leading brand of organic produce, I find the topic of sustainability on my plate every day in one way or another. Recently, I've seen a sea change in consumer concern about the environment. Just two years ago, during extensive consumer research, we talked to people across the country about why they choose the food they do.

Even though many consumers understood the environmental benefits of organic farming, they said they didn't want the fact that they purchased organic food to identify them as having a particular affinity for environmental issues. They chose organic food for personal health benefits, period. For some, the "greenness" of organic food was a bonus but not a reason to buy.

My, how times have changed! Today, concern for the environment and the clear challenges that face us are top of mind for many people. Two years ago, the Prius and compact fluorescent light bulbs were perceived as icons of the overly committed or, at worst, simply dorky. Today, they're hip.

It's no longer simply a matter of style and politics. The environmental challenges we face (global warming, peak oil, adequate clean water and more) aren't just for tree-huggers anymore. These are real issues with practical impacts on all of our businesses, today and into the future: rising energy costs and resulting transportation cost increases, concern about "food miles," extreme weather events that devastate crops, fights over water resources. Your consumers care about these issues now, and their concern will only increase over time.

Amid all that caring, there's also an awful lot of passionate opinion about what we all should be doing. When our public discussions become so heated, instead of motivating people to change, the rancorous debate makes people feel powerless; if they can't give up driving altogether, live off the grid and grow their own food, it seems they might as well make no changes at all. It can feel overwhelming.

Insistence on nothing less than perfection is the enemy of progress. And there are so many ways to make real progress without converting your rooftop to a solar energy farm. The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step. Here are three very simple ways to start:

1. Give your shoppers an incentive to use reusable bags.

More than 100 billion plastic shopping bags and 10 billion paper

grocery bags are thrown away in the United States each year. It's such a problem that some cities have written ordinances banning the plastic bags from distribution. If every household in the country used its own reusable tote instead of using paper grocery bags for just one shopping trip a year, we could save about 60,000 trees. There are many options with many price points — and they're great for billboarding your brand, too. In addition to offering bags for sale, give your shoppers an incentive to use them. For example, give your shoppers 5¢ off for every bag they bring, or enter them into a weekly drawing for a free bag of groceries. Celebrate the change.

Walk the walk: Make reusable bags a part of your family's regular routine.

2. Lead with compact fluorescent light bulbs.

Compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) are as bright as incandescents, but they use just 1/3 as much energy. Changing just one bulb in every household in the United States would reduce air pollution as much as taking 1 million cars off the road. That's an impressive improvement. Find out more at the U.S. government's Energy Star Web site.

Walk the walk: Change your home's light bulbs to CFLs as your incandescents burn out.

3. Expand your organic offerings.

Self-serving? Perhaps. But you should know that the environmental benefits of organic farming extend far beyond reducing chemicals in our water, air and food supplies. According

to a 23-year study by the Rodale Institute [Kutztown, PA], organic farm fields absorb the greenhouse gas, carbon dioxide, while similar conventionally farmed fields don't. At Earthbound Farm, this year our fields will absorb enough CO₂ to equal removing 7,500 cars from the road.

Walk the walk: Eat more organic food.

To make the most of each of these steps, give your staff opportunities to learn more about the real, tangible benefits of these small but powerful changes. And share that information with your shoppers with easily understood displays. Consumers look to retailers as trusted sources of information, and they'll seriously consider what you choose to share with them.

Starting the green journey isn't as challenging as it sometimes seems. But you have to start with a step or two. Why wait? Start walking.

pb

Insistence on
nothing less
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of progress.

Samantha Cabaluna is Director of Communications at Earthbound Farm

Finding – And Keeping – Talent



By Cindy Seel, Executive Director, PMA Education Foundation

A retail chain's rapid expansion means it needs to find enough experienced associates to fill new positions created in every department. Filling them in the produce division is particularly difficult — the special combination of product knowledge and understanding of the retail environment is difficult to find and crucial to profitability.

A distributor, in an ongoing effort to hire enough people to handle its growing operations, discovers many other companies are clamoring for the same small talent pool. The company realizes traditional approaches no longer work — and it will have to find other ways to entice the best people into considering careers in produce distribution.

A grower/shipper's management team strategically envisions its growth and the people needed to make it happen. The resulting new organization chart has a lot of empty slots, and team members realize no matter how great their growth potential, they can't do it without the right people.

Companies up and down the supply chain can identify with these scenarios. Ask almost any produce executive the biggest challenges he or she is facing, and chief among them are finding the right people. The best college and university graduates are drawn to higher-profile industries with bigger recruiting and compensation budgets. Companies recycle top talent as they compete in a dwindling labor pool.

So how are industry companies finding new employees? For the most part, they are using their own limited combinations of career fairs, campus recruiting, internships, word-of-mouth within produce and other perishables industries, hiring people away from other produce companies, employment Web sites and existing relationships.

The efforts to go it alone are not enough; the employee crunch is getting worse. Two years ago, industry leaders realized the need for a comprehensive initiative to address recruitment and retention challenges throughout the supply chain. The solution: the PMA Education Foundation (PMAEF), a not-for-profit organization mobilized in 2006 to focus on the future of the industry through investment in people.

PMAEF's founders realized there was no single, organized effort promoting the rewards and opportunities of careers in produce. In establishing the foundation, we've set out to change that. Our mission is to create partnerships with produce businesses and educational institutions to ensure a strong talent pool and continued leadership for our future.

Steve Barnard, president and CEO of Mission Produce, passionately believes in a unified effort. That's why his company contributes to PMAEF and why he agreed this year to chair the board of directors. "This is an industry-wide issue affecting every company in the industry," he said recently. "We need to take care of our own. As companies grow and change, we need a way to recruit and retain people for the entire industry even if they don't go to work for our respective companies."

It's a daunting task. However, demographic changes are

happening so rapidly, and the fight for talent is so fierce, the industry must take a proactive stance or it loses in the long run.

Bill Schuler, PMAEF's vice chair and president of Castellini Company, agrees there is strength in numbers, whether across the supply chain or within its segments. "We can't make much impact acting alone as individual companies," said Schuler recently. "However, just imagine if many companies in our industry combined resources. The organized approach to tackling recruitment and retention issues would enable us to accomplish things none of us could do alone."

What will PMAEF do to help sustain the viability of the industry? You often hear the phrase "from field to fork" but another supply chain demands our attention — student to leader. PMAEF is creating programs focused on the entire produce career cycle. Our goal is to recruit top talent to the industry and then keep them by developing their leadership potential. Initial foundation programs include the Nucci Scholarship for Culinary Innovation and the Pack Family/PMA Career Pathways program. These two event scholarships have been successful at raising awareness of our industry and recruiting quality employees, but they are not enough.

A more fundamental strategy is being put in place. Over the next few months we will develop a strong network of educators who can serve as a conduit between the industry and students. From that connection will grow programs such as produce industry guest lecture opportunities and a series of sample case studies professors can use to teach real-world industry issues. For students, we're planning a career resource Web site, job-shadowing programs and a job bank of full- and part-time positions. We'll help establish internships throughout the supply chain and develop an internship "effective practices" guide to enhance the value to students of existing programs.

And these are just the programs to attract new talent. We still need to address the challenges of career development for those in the industry. The possibilities are endless and exciting! Can we do all this and more? Yes, we can — if we have the support of the produce industry. "The foundation will grow in phases; what we're doing now is just the first phase," says Barnard. "We're looking for industry-wide support. As we grow the foundation, the potential for new programs will grow and we all will benefit in the long run."

To learn more about the PMA Education Foundation and its activities, visit www.pmaef.com. Want to contribute? We welcome your support in whatever way makes sense for you. Contact me at cseel@pmaef.com to find out the opportunities available.

The fight for talent is so fierce, the industry must take a proactive stance or it loses in the long run.

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American Ripener, LLC	90	38	800-338-2836	704-527-6705
Amerifresh, Inc.	130	133	559-266-2000	509-884-2223
Arkansas Tomato Shippers, LLC	53	1	888-706-2400	520-377-2874
Arkansas Tomato Shippers, LLC	51	6	888-706-2400	520-377-2874
ASG Produce, Inc.	78	41	805-981-1839	805-981-1842
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BelleHarvest Sales, Inc.	78	134	800-452-7753	616-794-3961
Black Stallion Logistics	72	24	646-401-9995	646-514-1614
Bland Farms	GA7	113	800-440-9543	912-654-3532
Blue Cook Services	69	5	630-668-3500	630-668-0303
Brooks Tropicals	41	8	800-327-4833	305-246-5827
Jack Brown Produce, Inc.	80	46	616-887-9568	616-887-9765
Bucolo Cold Storage	79	135	716-778-7631	716-778-8768
Bushmans', Inc.	132	136	800-826-0200	715-677-4076
Bushwick Commission Co., Inc.	127	137	800-645-9470	516-249-6047
California Fig Advisory Board	175	53	559-440-5400	559-438-5405
Cal-Organic Farms	25	26	661-845-3758	661-393-6458
California Table Grape Commission	155	108	559-447-8350	559-447-9184
California Tree Fruit Agreement	39	10	559-638-8260	559-638-8842
Capital City Fruit Co., Inc.	52	103	515-981-5111	515-981-4564
CarbAmericas	56	87	954-786-0000	954-786-96785
Central American Produce, Inc.	56	138	954-943-2303	954-943-2067
CF Fresh	28	112	360-855-0566	360-855-2430
Chelan Fresh Marketing	188	11	509-682-3854	509-682-5766
Chestnut Hill Farms	56	90	305-592-6969	305-436-8969
Chilean Avocado Importers Association	87	57	202-626-0560	
Colliotti & Sons, Inc.	74	59	215-389-3335	215-755-9616
Colorado Potato Administrative Committee	129	32	719-852-3322	719-852-4684
Columbia Marketing International	141	27	509-663-1955	509-663-2231
Coosemans Philadelphia, Inc.	65	158	215-334-3634	215-334-3636
Cowart Incorporated	GA17	86	912-565-9199	912-565-0199
Crystal Valley Foods	56	153	800-359-5631	305-592-9803
Customized Brokers	56	157	305-471-8989	305-471-8988
Date Pac LLC/ Bard Valley Medpool Date Growers	175	61	928-726-9191	928-726-9413
Deardorff Family Farms	18	151	805-487-7801	805-483-1286
Diamond Fruit Growers	138	123	541-354-1492	541-354-2123
Dole Fresh Fruit Company	159	119	818-879-6600	818-879-6628
Dole Fresh Fruit Company	2	3	818-879-6600	818-879-6628
dProduce Man Software	98	118	888-PRODMAN	650-712-9973
Duda Farm Fresh Foods, Inc.	7	139	561-978-5714	561-978-5705
Earthbound Farm	19	91	888-624-1004	831-623-7886
East Coast Brokers & Packers, Inc.	187	16	800-557-7751	813-869-9850
Eli & Ali, LLC	31	71	866-354-2547	718-389-1514
Fagerberg Produce Co.	149	55	970-834-1353	970-834-1434
Fagerberg Produce Inc.	135	75	970-834-1353	970-834-1434
The Florida Tomato Committee	52	120	407-894-3071	407-898-4296
Four Seasons Produce, Inc.	61	13	800-422-8384	717-721-2597
Fowler Farms	85	140	315-594-8068	315-594-8060
Fresh Partners AB	40	105	46-8-742-1215	46-8-742-6201
Fresh Plants, Inc.	GA12	62	229-928-2699	229-928-0183
Fresh Pro Trading Co.	27	14	877-321-8200	717-721-2597
Fresh Produce Association of The Americas	88	20	520-287-2707	520-287-2948
Fru-Veg Marketing, Inc.	56	89	305-591-7766	305-591-7665
Fruit Royale, Incorporated	46	141	661-720-2740	661-720-2745
Fruition	188	11	509-682-3854	509-682-5766
G & G Produce, Inc.	68	159	215-336-9922	215-336-9925
General Produce, Inc.	GA5	76	800-782-5833	404-361-1841
Genpro Transportation Services, Inc.	173	15	800-243-6770	973-589-1877
Giorgio Fresh Co.	46	7	800-330-5711	610-939-0296
Global Organic Specialty Source, Inc.	24	55	877-952-1198	941-358-6551
GPOD of Idaho	122	142	208-357-7691	208-357-5151
Green Giant Fresh	23	78	800-767-6104	208-524-2420
Grimmway Farms	25	26	661-845-3758	661-393-6458
Harvest Sensations	56	132	305-591-8173	305-591-8175
Hendrix Produce, Inc.	GA10	115	800-752-1551	912-685-4420
Hess Brothers Fruit Co.	79	70	717-656-2631	717-656-4526
Hollandia Produce	165	9	805-684-4146	805-684-9363
Hunter Brothers Inc.	74	37	215-336-4343	215-336-4340
Idaho Potato Commission	121	92	208-334-2350	208-334-2274
International Hotel Motel & Restaurant Show	140	25	800-272-SHOW	
J&R Orchards	175	97	559-665-1712	559-665-7059
Jacobs, Malcolm & Burr, Inc.	57	154	415-285-0400	415-824-4844
JBJ Distributing, Inc.	36	68	714-992-4920	714-992-0433
E.W. Kean Co., Inc.	63	50	215-336-2321	215-336-1596
Keyes Fibre	35	155	800-786-8517	509-663-1023
Keystone Fruit Marketing, Inc.	135	98	717-597-2112	717-597-4096
Keystone Fruit Marketing, Inc.	57	143	772-316-0364	717-597-4096

COMPANY	PAGE #	RS#	PHONE	FAX
Keystone Fruit Marketing, Inc.	79	99	717-597-2112	717-597-4096
Keystone Fruit Marketing, Inc. / Walla Walla	135	100	509-526-9200	509-527-3110
Lakeside Organic Gardens	30	23	831-761-8797	831-728-1104
LGS Specialty Sales, Ltd.	170	144	800-796-2349	718-542-2354
Lifeforce Foods, Inc.	43	2	800-669-3169	208-263-7821
Maine Potato Board	130	28	207-769-5061	207-764-4148
Mann Packing Company, Inc.	9	19	800-884-6266	831-422-5171
J. Marchini & Son / LeGrand	20	85	559-665-9710	559-665-9714
Mariani Packing Co.	176	4	707-452-2800	707-453-8334
Martin Produce, Inc.	150	145	970-352-6712	970-352-5687
Melissa's/World Variety Produce, Inc.	36	96	800-468-7111	323-588-7841
Mexican Hass Avocado Importers' Assoc.	91	30	410-877-3142	
Mexican Hass Avocado Importers' Assoc.	89	34	410-877-3142	
Michigan Apple Committee	80	31	800-456-2753	517-669-9506
Misionero Vegetables	24	63	800-EAT-SALAD	831-424-0740
Mission Produce, Inc.	57	129	888-549-3421	805-981-3660
Nardella, Inc.	63	93	215-336-1558	215-336-5757
Nathel & Nathel	44-45	82	718-991-6050	718-378-1378
Naturally Fresh	GA3	39	404-765-9000	404-765-9016
Naturipe Berry Growers	17	74	239-591-1664	239-591-8133
New York Apple Association, Inc.	83	21	585-924-2171	585-924-1629
New York Dept of Agriculture	163	121	800-554-4501	
Nickey Gregory Company, LLC	GA11	81	404-366-7410	404-363-1169
North Bay Produce	57	160	231-946-1941	231-946-1902
Okray Family Farms	133	146	715-344-0918	715-344-7324
P.E.I. Potato Board	128	79	902-892-6551	902-566-4914
Pacific Organic Produce	20	147	415-673-5555	415-673-5585
Pacific Tomato Growers/Pacific Triple E	30	29	941-722-0778	941-729-5829
Pacific Tomato Growers/Pacific Triple E	53	44	209-835-7500	209-835-7956
Pandol Brothers, Inc.	53	110	661-725-3145	661-725-4741
Pantoli Farms, Inc.	GA6	65	229-528-4252	229-528-4589
Paulk Farms	GA10	128	229-468-7873	229-468-7876
Pear Bureau Northwest	139	48	503-652-9720	503-652-9721
The Perishable Specialist, Inc.	57	126	305-477-9906	305-477-9975
David Petrocco Farms, Inc.	150	77	303-659-6498	303-659-7645
Phillips Tomato & Produce Corp.	67	60	215-755-2775	215-755-2791
Pinto Brothers, Inc.	66	94	800-523-4047	215-336-5422
Plastic Suppliers	33	52	866-ERTH-1ST	614-471-9033
Potatodon Produce	23	78	800-767-6104	208-524-2420
Primavera Marketing, Inc.	79	42	209-931-9420	209-931-9424
Produce Exchange Co. of Atlanta, Inc.	GA15	102	800-480-4463	404-608-0401
Produce for Better Health Foundation	81	104	302-235-2329	302-235-5555
The Produce Marketing Association	181	54	302-738-7100	302-731-2409
The Produce Marketing Association	75	101	302-738-7100	302-731-2409
Produce Pro, Inc.	97	12	630-395-0535	630-572-0390
Progressive Marketing Group	57	130	323-890-8100	323-890-8113
Quaker City Produce Co.	66	64	215-467-5000	215-336-4416
Rainier Fruit Company	137	117	509-697-6131	509-697-3800
Walter P. Rawl & Sons, Inc.	93	47	803-894-1900	803-359-8850
Rice Fruit Company	79	69	800-627-3359	717-677-9842
Riveridge Produce Marketing, Inc.	79	43	800-968-8833	616-887-6874
Riveridge Produce Marketing, Inc.	77	73	616-887-6873	616-887-6874
Rosemont Farms Corporation	57	161	877-877-8017	561-999-0241
Rosemont Farms Corporation	GA9	148	877-877-8017	561-999-0241
Ryeco, Incorporated	67	45	215-551-8883	215-551-9036
Sage Fruit	145	36	509-248-5828	509-457-2113
Sambroil Packaging	32	33	831-724-7581	831-724-1403
The Sample Dome	40	107	800-596-3676	403-936-5868
Setton International Foods, Inc.	176	22	631-543-8090	631-543-8070
Shannon Vineyards	GA15	35	912-857-3876	305-675-3876
Shuman Produce, Inc.	GA20	114	912-557-4477	912-557-4478
Skagit Valley's Best Produce, Inc.	130	67	877-787-2378	360-848-0778
Skyline Potatoes	148	162	719-754-3484	719-754-2200
South Georgia Produce, Inc.	GA8	66	229-559-6071	229-559-1091
Southern Specialties	57	80	954-784-6500	954-784-5800
Spice World, Inc.	40	109	800-433-4979	407-857-7171
Stea Bros., Inc.	68	51	215-336-7806	215-336-2194
Sunlight Int'l. Sales	47	124	661-792-6360	661-792-6529
Sunrise Growers	152	156	714-630-2050	714-630-0215
Sweet Onion Trading Company	49	111	800-699-3727	321-674-2003
Tanimura & Antle, Inc.	5	72	800-772-4542	831-455-3915
Target Interstate Systems, Inc.	64	164	800-338-2743	800-422-4329
Team Produce International, Inc.	57	88	800-505-0665	305-513-9596
Tennessee Dept. of Agriculture	58	116	615-837-5517	615-837-5194
Thermal Technologies, Incorporated	169	17	803-691-8000	610-353-8663
Val Verde Vegetable Co., Inc.	94	163	956-994-1310	956-994-1312
A. Vassallo, Inc.	70	95	215-336-1984	215-336-7955
John Vena, Inc.	70	49	215-336-0766	215-336-2812
Vidalia Onion Committee	INSERT	400	912-537-1918	912-537-2166
Wada Farms Potatoes Inc	123	149	888-BUY-WADA	208-785-0415
Waverly Plastics	22	131	800-454-6377	800-428-7793
Weyerhaeuser Paper Co.	29	125	800-TOP-BOXES	
Yakima Fresh LLC	143	150	800-541-0394	847-685-0474

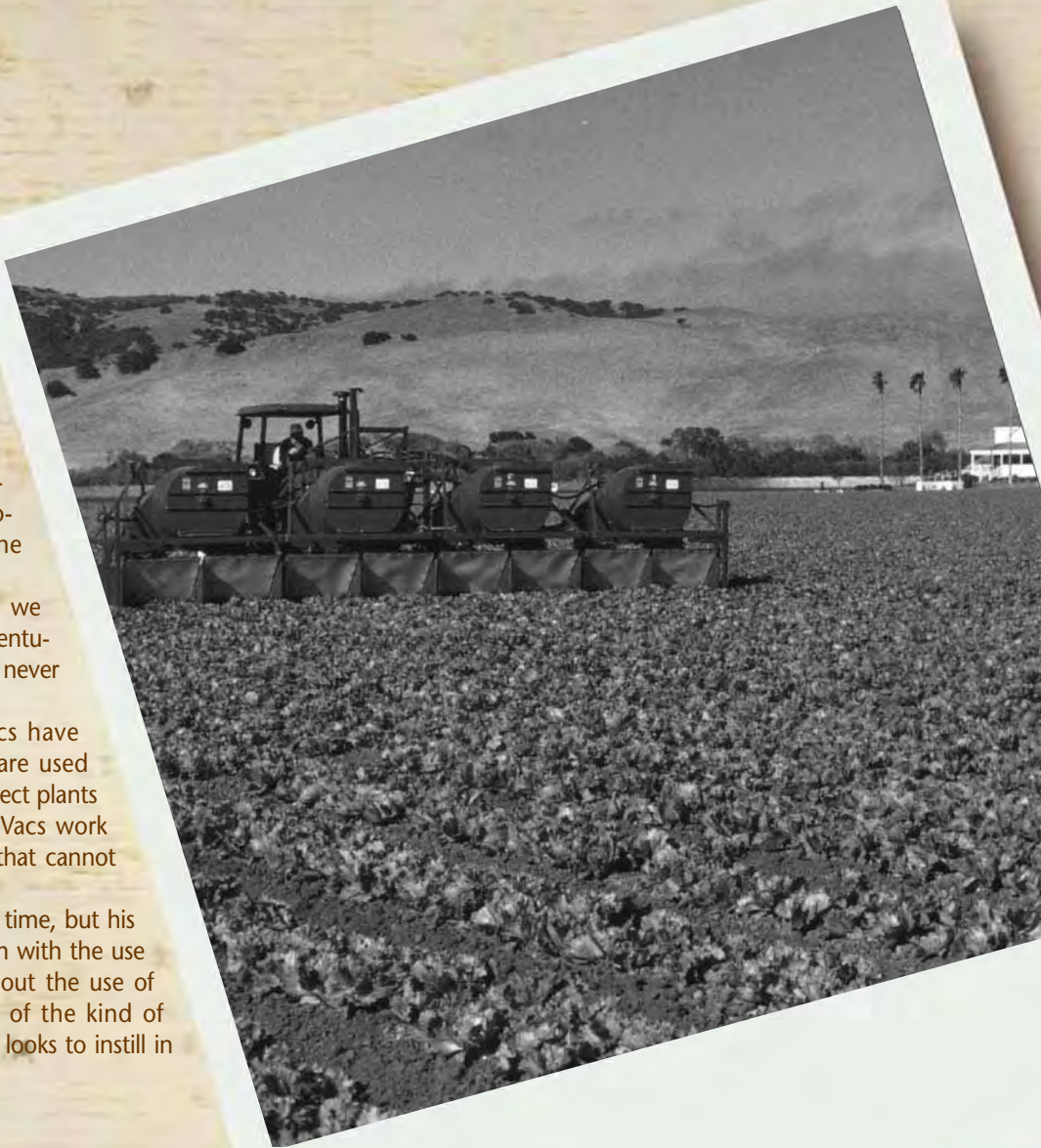
Blast from the Past

In the late 1980s, an invasion of pesky white flies in Yuma, AZ, spawned the creation of a revolutionary tool that saved one California grower's iceberg and romaine lettuce crops. With no chemicals effective enough to help the plagued winter crops, Rick Antle, CEO of Tanimura and Antle, Inc., Salinas, CA, pioneered a machine that could suck the flies off the plants.

"We called it the Bug Vac, though we never put a patent on it," he says. "Eventually, the white flies went away and they never came back."

Although Antle's original Bug Vacs have since been dismantled, similar tools are used today in the strawberry industry to protect plants from lygus bugs. Antle says the Bug Vacs work best when combating winged insects that cannot tightly latch onto plants.

Antle may not have known it at the time, but his focus on solving a horticultural problem with the use of innovative technology — and without the use of toxic chemicals — was a progenitor of the kind of thought that today's Green Movement looks to instill in all agriculture.



The *Blast from the Past* is a regular feature of PRODUCE BUSINESS. We welcome submissions of your old photos, labels or advertisements along with suggested captions. Please send materials to: Editor, PRODUCE BUSINESS, P.O. Box 810425, Boca Raton, FL 33481-0425, or e-mail ProduceBusiness@PhoenixMediaNet.com

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